

Spring 2016 Public Domain Short Works



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THE CALIFORNIAN'S TALE

by Mark Twain

The \$30,000 Bequest and Other Stories

Thirty-five years ago I was out prospecting on the Stanislaus, tramping all day long with pick and pan and horn, and washing a hatful of dirt here and there, always expecting to make a rich strike, and never doing it. It was a lovely region, woodsy, balmy, delicious, and had once been populous, long years before, but now the people had vanished and the charming paradise was a solitude. They went away when the surface diggings gave out. In one place, where a busy little city with banks and newspapers and fire companies and a mayor and aldermen had been, was

nothing but a wide expanse of emerald turf, with not even the faintest sign that human life had ever been present there. This was down toward Tuttletown. In the country neighborhood thereabouts, along the dusty roads, one found at intervals the prettiest little cottage homes, snug and cozy, and so cobwebbed with vines snowed thick with roses that the doors and windows were wholly hidden from sight--sign that these were deserted homes, forsaken years ago by defeated and disappointed families who could neither sell them nor give them away. Now and then, half an hour apart, one came across solitary log cabins of the earliest mining days, built by the first gold-miners, the predecessors of the cottage-builders. In some few cases these cabins were still occupied; and when this was so, you could depend upon it that the occupant was the very pioneer who had built the cabin; and you could depend on another thing, too--that he was there because he had once had his opportunity to go home to the States rich, and had not done it; had rather lost his wealth, and had then in his humiliation resolved to sever all communication with his home relatives and friends, and be to them thenceforth as one dead. Round about California in that day were scattered a host of these living dead men--pride-smitten poor fellows, grizzled and old at forty, whose secret thoughts were made all of regrets and longings--regrets for their wasted lives, and longings to be out of the struggle and done with it all.

It was a lonesome land! Not a sound in all those peaceful expanses of grass and woods but the drowsy hum of insects; no glimpse of man or beast; nothing to keep up your spirits and make you glad to be alive.

And so, at last, in the early part of the afternoon, when I caught sight of a human creature, I felt a most grateful uplift. This person was a man about forty-five years old, and he was standing at the gate of one of those cozy little rose-clad cottages of the sort already referred to. However, this one hadn't a deserted look; it had the look of being lived in and petted and cared for and looked after; and so had its front yard, which was a garden of flowers, abundant, gay, and flourishing. I was invited in, of course, and required to make myself at home--it was the custom of the country.

It was delightful to be in such a place, after long weeks of daily and nightly familiarity with miners' cabins--with all which this implies of dirt floor, never-made beds, tin plates and cups, bacon and beans and black coffee, and nothing of ornament but war pictures from the Eastern illustrated papers tacked to the log walls. That was all hard, cheerless, materialistic desolation, but here was a nest which had aspects to rest the tired eye and refresh that something in one's nature which, after long fasting, recognizes, when confronted by the belongings of art, howsoever cheap and modest they may be, that it has unconsciously been famishing and now has found nourishment. I could not have believed that a rag carpet could feast me so, and so content me; or that there could be such solace to the soul in wall-paper and framed lithographs, and bright-colored tidies and lamp-mats, and Windsor chairs, and varnished what-nots, with sea-shells and books and china vases on them, and the score of little unclassifiable tricks and touches that a woman's hand distributes about a home, which one sees without knowing he sees them, yet would miss in a moment if they were taken away. The delight that was in my heart showed in my face, and the man saw it and was pleased; saw it so plainly that he answered it as if it had been spoken.

"All her work," he said, caressingly; "she did it all herself--every bit," and he took the room in with a glance which was full of affectionate worship. One of those soft Japanese fabrics with which women drape with careful negligence the upper part of a picture-frame was out of adjustment. He noticed it, and rearranged it with cautious pains, stepping back several times to gauge the effect before he got it to suit him. Then he gave it a light finishing pat or two with his hand, and said: "She always does that. You can't tell just what it lacks, but it does lack something until you've done that--you can see it yourself

after it's done, but that is all you know; you can't find out the law of it. It's like the finishing pats a mother gives the child's hair after she's got it combed and brushed, I reckon. I've seen her fix all these things so much that I can do them all just her way, though I don't know the law of any of them. But she knows the law. She knows the why and the how both; but I don't know the why; I only know the how."

He took me into a bedroom so that I might wash my hands; such a bedroom as I had not seen for years: white counterpane, white pillows, carpeted floor, papered walls, pictures, dressing-table, with mirror and pin-cushion and dainty toilet things; and in the corner a wash-stand, with real china-ware bowl and pitcher, and with soap in a china dish, and on a rack more than a dozen towels--towels too clean and white for one out of practice to use without some vague sense of profanation. So my face spoke again, and he answered with gratified words:

"All her work; she did it all herself--every bit. Nothing here that hasn't felt the touch of her hand. Now you would think--But I mustn't talk so much."

By this time I was wiping my hands and glancing from detail to detail of the room's belongings, as one is apt to do when he is in a new place, where everything he sees is a comfort to his eye and his spirit; and I became conscious, in one of those unaccountable ways, you know, that there was something there somewhere that the man wanted me to discover for myself. I knew it perfectly, and I knew he was trying to help me by furtive indications with his eye, so I tried hard to get on the right track, being eager to gratify him. I failed several times, as I could see out of the corner of my eye without being told; but at last I knew I must be looking straight at the thing--knew it from the pleasure issuing in invisible waves from him. He broke into a happy laugh, and rubbed his hands together, and cried out:

"That's it! You've found it. I knew you would. It's her picture."

I went to the little black-walnut bracket on the farther wall, and did find there what I had not yet noticed--a daguerreotype-case. It contained the sweetest girlish face, and the most beautiful, as it seemed to me, that I had ever seen. The man drank the admiration from my face, and was fully satisfied.

"Nineteen her last birthday," he said, as he put the picture back; "and that was the day we were married. When you see her--ah, just wait till you see her!"

"Where is she? When will she be in?"

"Oh, she's away now. She's gone to see her people. They live forty or fifty miles from here. She's been gone two weeks today."

"When do you expect her back?"

"This is Wednesday. She'll be back Saturday, in the evening--about nine o'clock, likely."

I felt a sharp sense of disappointment.

"I'm sorry, because I'll be gone then," I said, regretfully.

"Gone? No--why should you go? Don't go. She'll be disappointed."

She would be disappointed--that beautiful creature! If she had said the words herself they could hardly have blessed me more. I was feeling a deep, strong longing to see her--a longing so supplicating, so insistent, that it made me afraid. I said to myself: "I will go straight away from this place, for my peace of mind's sake."

"You see, she likes to have people come and stop with us--people who know things, and can talk--people like you. She delights in it; for she knows--oh, she knows nearly everything herself, and can talk, oh, like a bird--and the books she reads, why, you would be astonished. Don't go; it's only a little while, you know, and she'll be so disappointed."

I heard the words, but hardly noticed them, I was so deep in my thinkings and strugglings. He left me, but I didn't know. Presently he was back, with the picture case in his hand, and he held it open before me and said:

"There, now, tell her to her face you could have stayed to see her, and you wouldn't."

That second glimpse broke down my good resolution. I would stay and take the risk. That night we smoked the tranquil pipe, and talked till late about various things, but mainly about her; and certainly I had had no such pleasant and restful time for many a day. The Thursday followed and slipped comfortably away. Toward twilight a big miner from three miles away came--one of the grizzled, stranded pioneers--and gave us warm salutation, clothed in grave and sober speech. Then he said:

"I only just dropped over to ask about the little madam, and when is she coming home. Any news from her?"

"Oh, yes, a letter. Would you like to hear it, Tom?"

"Well, I should think I would, if you don't mind, Henry!"

Henry got the letter out of his wallet, and said he would skip some of the private phrases, if we were willing; then he went on and read the bulk of it--a loving, sedate, and altogether charming and gracious piece of handiwork, with a postscript full of affectionate regards and messages to Tom, and Joe, and Charley, and other close friends and neighbors.

As the reader finished, he glanced at Tom, and cried out:

"Oho, you're at it again! Take your hands away, and let me see your eyes. You always do that when I read a letter from her. I will write and tell her."

"Oh no, you mustn't, Henry. I'm getting old, you know, and any little disappointment makes me want to cry. I thought she'd be here herself, and now you've got only a letter."

"Well, now, what put that in your head? I thought everybody knew she wasn't coming till Saturday."

"Saturday! Why, come to think, I did know it. I wonder what's the matter with me lately? Certainly I knew it. Ain't we all getting ready for her? Well, I must be going now. But I'll be on hand when she comes, old man!"

Late Friday afternoon another gray veteran tramped over from his cabin a mile or so away, and said the boys wanted to have a little gaiety and a good time Saturday night, if Henry thought she wouldn't be too tired after her journey to be kept up.

"Tired? She tired! Oh, hear the man! Joe, YOU know she'd sit up six weeks to please any one of you!"

When Joe heard that there was a letter, he asked to have it read, and the loving messages in it for him broke the old fellow all up; but he said he was such an old wreck that THAT would happen to him if she only just mentioned his name. "Lord, we miss her so!" he said.

Saturday afternoon I found I was taking out my watch pretty often. Henry noticed it, and said, with a startled look:

"You don't think she ought to be here soon, do you?"

I felt caught, and a little embarrassed; but I laughed, and said it was a habit of mine when I was in a state of expentancy. But he didn't seem quite satisfied; and from that time on he began to show uneasiness. Four times he walked me up the road to a point whence we could see a long distance; and there he would stand, shading his eyes with his hand, and looking. Several times he said:

"I'm getting worried, I'm getting right down worried. I know she's not due till about nine o'clock, and yet something seems to be trying to warn me that something's happened. You don't think anything has happened, do you?"

I began to get pretty thoroughly ashamed of him for his childishness; and at last, when he repeated that imploring question still another time, I lost my patience for the moment, and spoke pretty brutally to him. It seemed to shrivel him up and cow him; and he looked so wounded and so humble after that, that I detested myself for having done the cruel and unnecessary thing. And so I was glad when Charley, another veteran, arrived toward the edge of the evening, and nestled up to Henry to hear the letter read, and talked over the preparations for the welcome. Charley fetched out one hearty speech after another, and did his best to drive away his friend's bodings and apprehensions.

"Anything HAPPENED to her? Henry, that's pure nonsense. There isn't anything going to happen to her; just make your mind easy as to that. What did the letter say? Said she was well, didn't it? And said she'd be here by nine o'clock, didn't it? Did you ever know her to fail of her word? Why, you know you never did. Well, then, don't you fret; she'll BE here, and that's absolutely certain, and as sure as you are born. Come, now, let's get to decorating--not much time left."

Pretty soon Tom and Joe arrived, and then all hands set about adorning the house with flowers. Toward nine the three miners said that as they had brought their instruments they might as well tune up, for the boys and girls would soon be arriving now, and hungry for a good, old-fashioned break-down. A fiddle, a banjo, and a clarinet--these were the instruments. The trio took their places side by side, and began to play some rattling dance-music, and beat time with their big boots.

It was getting very close to nine. Henry was standing in the door with his eyes directed up the road, his body swaying to the torture of his mental distress. He had been made to drink his wife's health and safety several times, and now Tom shouted:

"All hands stand by! One more drink, and she's here!"

Joe brought the glasses on a waiter, and served the party. I reached for one of the two remaining glasses, but Joe growled under his breath:

"Drop that! Take the other."

Which I did. Henry was served last. He had hardly swallowed his drink when the clock began to strike. He listened till it finished, his face growing pale and paler; then he said:

"Boys, I'm sick with fear. Help me--I want to lie down!"

They helped him to the sofa. He began to nestle and drowse, but presently spoke like one talking in his sleep, and said: "Did I hear horses' feet? Have they come?"

One of the veterans answered, close to his ear: "It was Jimmy Parish

come to say the party got delayed, but they're right up the road a piece, and coming along. Her horse is lame, but she'll be here in half an hour."

"Oh, I'm SO thankful nothing has happened!"

He was asleep almost before the words were out of his mouth. In a moment those handy men had his clothes off, and had tucked him into his bed in the chamber where I had washed my hands. They closed the door and came back. Then they seemed preparing to leave; but I said: "Please don't go, gentlemen. She won't know me; I am a stranger."

They glanced at each other. Then Joe said:

"She? Poor thing, she's been dead nineteen years!"

"Dead?"

"That or worse. She went to see her folks half a year after she was married, and on her way back, on a Saturday evening, the Indians captured her within five miles of this place, and she's never been heard of since."

"And he lost his mind in consequence?"

"Never has been sane an hour since. But he only gets bad when that time of year comes round. Then we begin to drop in here, three days before she's due, to encourage him up, and ask if he's heard from her, and Saturday we all come and fix up the house with flowers, and get everything ready for a dance. We've done it every year for nineteen years. The first Saturday there was twenty-seven of us, without counting the girls; there's only three of us now, and the girls are gone. We drug him to sleep, or he would go wild; then he's all right for another year--thinks she's with him till the last three or four days come round; then he begins to look for her, and gets out his poor old letter, and we come and ask him to read it to us. Lord, she was a darling!"

ONE OF TWINS

A LETTER FOUND AMONG THE PAPERS OF THE LATE MORTIMER BARR

from **Can Such Things Be?**

by *Ambrose Bierce*

You ask me if in my experience as one of a pair of twins I ever observed anything unaccountable by the natural laws with which we have acquaintance. As to that you shall judge; perhaps we have not all acquaintance with the same natural laws. You may know some that I do not, and what is to me unaccountable may be very clear to you.

You knew my brother John--that is, you knew him when you knew that I was not present; but neither you nor, I believe, any human being could distinguish between him and me if we chose to seem alike. Our parents could not; ours is the only instance of which I have any knowledge of so close resemblance as that. I speak of my brother John, but I am not at all sure that his name was not Henry and mine John. We were regularly christened, but afterward, in the very act of tattooing us with small distinguishing marks, the operator lost his reckoning; and although I bear upon my forearm a small "H" and he bore a "J," it is by no means certain that the letters ought not to have been transposed. During our boyhood our parents tried to distinguish us more obviously by our clothing and other simple devices, but we would so frequently exchange suits and otherwise circumvent the enemy that they abandoned all such ineffectual attempts, and during all the years that we lived together at home everybody recognized the difficulty of the situation and made the best of it by calling us both "Jehnry." I have often wondered at my father's forbearance in not branding us conspicuously upon our unworthy brows, but as we were tolerably good boys and used our power of embarrassment and annoyance with commendable moderation, we escaped the iron. My father was, in fact, a singularly good-natured man, and I think quietly enjoyed nature's practical joke.

Soon after we had come to California, and settled at San Jose (where the only good fortune that awaited us was our meeting with so kind a friend as you) the family, as you know, was broken up by the death of both my parents in the same week. My father died insolvent and the homestead was sacrificed to pay his debts. My sisters returned to

relatives in the East, but owing to your kindness John and I, then twenty-two years of age, obtained employment in San Francisco, in different quarters of the town. Circumstances did not permit us to live together, and we saw each other infrequently, sometimes not oftener than once a week. As we had few acquaintances in common, the fact of our extraordinary likeness was little known. I come now to the matter of your inquiry.

One day soon after we had come to this city I was walking down Market street late in the afternoon, when I was accosted by a well-dressed man of middle age, who after greeting me cordially said: "Stevens, I know, of course, that you do not go out much, but I have told my wife about you, and she would be glad to see you at the house. I have a notion, too, that my girls are worth knowing. Suppose you come out to-morrow at six and dine with us, en famille; and then if the ladies can't amuse you afterward I'll stand in with a few games of billiards."

This was said with so bright a smile and so engaging a manner that I had not the heart to refuse, and although I had never seen the man in my life I promptly replied: "You are very good, sir, and it will give me great pleasure to accept the invitation. Please present my compliments to Mrs. Margovan and ask her to expect me."

With a shake of the hand and a pleasant parting word the man passed on. That he had mistaken me for my brother was plain enough. That was an error to which I was accustomed and which it was not my habit to rectify unless the matter seemed important. But how had I known that this man's name was Margovan? It certainly is not a name that one would apply to a man at random, with a probability that it would be right. In point of fact, the name was as strange to me as the man.

The next morning I hastened to where my brother was employed and met him coming out of the office with a number of bills that he was to collect. I told him how I had "committed" him and added that if he didn't care to keep the engagement I should be delighted to continue the impersonation.

"That's queer," he said thoughtfully. "Margovan is the only man in

the office here whom I know well and like. When he came in this morning and we had passed the usual greetings some singular impulse prompted me to say: 'Oh, I beg your pardon, Mr. Margovan, but I neglected to ask your address.' I got the address, but what under the sun I was to do with it, I did not know until now. It's good of you to offer to take the consequence of your impudence, but I'll eat that dinner myself, if you please."

He ate a number of dinners at the same place--more than were good for him, I may add without disparaging their quality; for he fell in love with Miss Margovan, proposed marriage to her and was heartlessly accepted.

Several weeks after I had been informed of the engagement, but before it had been convenient for me to make the acquaintance of the young woman and her family, I met one day on Kearney street a handsome but somewhat dissipated-looking man whom something prompted me to follow and watch, which I did without any scruple whatever. He turned up Geary street and followed it until he came to Union square. There he looked at his watch, then entered the square. He loitered about the paths for some time, evidently waiting for someone. Presently he was joined by a fashionably dressed and beautiful young woman and the two walked away up Stockton street, I following. I now felt the necessity of extreme caution, for although the girl was a stranger it seemed to me that she would recognize me at a glance. They made several turns from one street to another and finally, after both had taken a hasty look all about--which I narrowly evaded by stepping into a doorway--they entered a house of which I do not care to state the location. Its location was better than its character.

I protest that my action in playing the spy upon these two strangers was without assignable motive. It was one of which I might or might not be ashamed, according to my estimate of the character of the person finding it out. As an essential part of a narrative educed by your question it is related here without hesitancy or shame.

A week later John took me to the house of his prospective father-in-law, and in Miss Margovan, as you have already surmised, but to my profound astonishment, I recognized the heroine of that discreditable adventure. A gloriously beautiful heroine of a discreditable

adventure I must in justice admit that she was; but that fact has only this importance: her beauty was such a surprise to me that it cast a doubt upon her identity with the young woman I had seen before; how could the marvelous fascination of her face have failed to strike me at that time? But no--there was no possibility of error; the difference was due to costume, light and general surroundings.

John and I passed the evening at the house, enduring, with the fortitude of long experience, such delicate enough banter as our likeness naturally suggested. When the young lady and I were left alone for a few minutes I looked her squarely in the face and said with sudden gravity:

"You, too, Miss Margovan, have a double: I saw her last Tuesday afternoon in Union square."

She trained her great gray eyes upon me for a moment, but her glance was a trifle less steady than my own and she withdrew it, fixing it on the tip of her shoe.

"Was she very like me?" she asked, with an indifference which I thought a little overdone.

"So like," said I, "that I greatly admired her, and being unwilling to lose sight of her I confess that I followed her until--Miss Margovan, are you sure that you understand?"

She was now pale, but entirely calm. She again raised her eyes to mine, with a look that did not falter.

"What do you wish me to do?" she asked. "You need not fear to name your terms. I accept them."

It was plain, even in the brief time given me for reflection, that in dealing with this girl ordinary methods would not do, and ordinary exactions were needless.

"Miss Margovan," I said, doubtless with something of the compassion in my voice that I had in my heart, "it is impossible not to think

you the victim of some horrible compulsion. Rather than impose new embarrassments upon you I would prefer to aid you to regain your freedom."

She shook her head, sadly and hopelessly, and I continued, with agitation:

"Your beauty unnerves me. I am disarmed by your frankness and your distress. If you are free to act upon conscience you will, I believe, do what you conceive to be best; if you are not--well, Heaven help us all! You have nothing to fear from me but such opposition to this marriage as I can try to justify on--on other grounds."

These were not my exact words, but that was the sense of them, as nearly as my sudden and conflicting emotions permitted me to express it. I rose and left her without another look at her, met the others as they reentered the room and said, as calmly as I could: "I have been bidding Miss Margovan good evening; it is later than I thought."

John decided to go with me. In the street he asked if I had observed anything singular in Julia's manner.

"I thought her ill," I replied; "that is why I left." Nothing more was said.

The next evening I came late to my lodgings. The events of the previous evening had made me nervous and ill; I had tried to cure myself and attain to clear thinking by walking in the open air, but I was oppressed with a horrible presentiment of evil--a presentiment which I could not formulate. It was a chill, foggy night; my clothing and hair were damp and I shook with cold. In my dressing-gown and slippers before a blazing grate of coals I was even more uncomfortable. I no longer shivered but shuddered--there is a difference. The dread of some impending calamity was so strong and dispiriting that I tried to drive it away by inviting a real sorrow--tried to dispel the conception of a terrible future by substituting the memory of a painful past. I recalled the death of my parents and endeavored to fix my mind upon the last sad scenes at their bedsides and their graves. It all seemed vague and unreal, as having occurred

ages ago and to another person. Suddenly, striking through my thought and parting it as a tense cord is parted by the stroke of steel--I can think of no other comparison--I heard a sharp cry as of one in mortal agony! The voice was that of my brother and seemed to come from the street outside my window. I sprang to the window and threw it open. A street lamp directly opposite threw a wan and ghastly light upon the wet pavement and the fronts of the houses. A single policeman, with upturned collar, was leaning against a gatepost, quietly smoking a cigar. No one else was in sight. I closed the window and pulled down the shade, seated myself before the fire and tried to fix my mind upon my surroundings. By way of assisting, by performance of some familiar act, I looked at my watch; it marked half-past eleven. Again I heard that awful cry! It seemed in the room--at my side. I was frightened and for some moments had not the power to move. A few minutes later--I have no recollection of the intermediate time--I found myself hurrying along an unfamiliar street as fast as I could walk. I did not know where I was, nor whither I was going, but presently sprang up the steps of a house before which were two or three carriages and in which were moving lights and a subdued confusion of voices. It was the house of Mr. Margovan.

You know, good friend, what had occurred there. In one chamber lay Julia Margovan, hours dead by poison; in another John Stevens, bleeding from a pistol wound in the chest, inflicted by his own hand. As I burst into the room, pushed aside the physicians and laid my hand upon his forehead he unclosed his eyes, stared blankly, closed them slowly and died without a sign.

I knew no more until six weeks afterward, when I had been nursed back to life by your own saintly wife in your own beautiful home. All of that you know, but what you do not know is this--which, however, has no bearing upon the subject of your psychological researches--at least not upon that branch of them in which, with a delicacy and consideration all your own, you have asked for less assistance than I think I have given you:

One moonlight night several years afterward I was passing through Union square. The hour was late and the square deserted. Certain memories of the past naturally came into my mind as I came to the

spot where I had once witnessed that fateful assignation, and with that unaccountable perversity which prompts us to dwell upon thoughts of the most painful character I seated myself upon one of the benches to indulge them. A man entered the square and came along the walk toward me. His hands were clasped behind him, his head was bowed; he seemed to observe nothing. As he approached the shadow in which I sat I recognized him as the man whom I had seen meet Julia Margovan years before at that spot. But he was terribly altered--gray, worn and haggard. Dissipation and vice were in evidence in every look; illness was no less apparent. His clothing was in disorder, his hair fell across his forehead in a derangement which was at once uncanny and picturesque. He looked fitter for restraint than liberty--the restraint of a hospital.

With no defined purpose I rose and confronted him. He raised his head and looked me full in the face. I have no words to describe the ghastly change that came over his own; it was a look of unspeakable terror--he thought himself eye to eye with a ghost. But he was a courageous man. "Damn you, John Stevens!" he cried, and lifting his trembling arm he dashed his fist feebly at my face and fell headlong upon the gravel as I walked away.

Somebody found him there, stone-dead. Nothing more is known of him, not even his name. To know of a man that he is dead should be enough.

ESCAPED.

by Sarah Warner Brooks

from *My Fire Opal, and Other Tales*

In this roomy corner cell, which rejoices in a glazed window, and is far more cheerful than the ordinary hospital compartment, a pale, earnest man, with sensitive face and iron-gray hair, sits writing.

Looking over his shoulder, you would perceive that (absurd though it may seem) he is making entries in a regular nautical log-book. This has been, for many years, his daily practise; for this convict, whose bowed form and subdued mien retain no traces of the sometime "jolly tar," is a born sailor.

His prison name is Robert Henderson. His is the old, old story--a wild bout in port; a drunken quarrel with a drunken shipmate; a reckless assault; an unintentional murder, and a consequent life-term in the State Prison. Although in hospital for treatment, Henderson is still on his feet, and quite competent to undertake the care of the feebler sinners who are, from time to time, consigned to the other cot in this--his sleeping cell.

Eighteen slow years behind the bars have brought in their weary train salutary repentance and unavailing regret; and, under their pressure, he is gradually going to pieces. Time has been when his whole being was dominated by a restless, homesick yearning for the sea--a form of that nostalgia, recognized in medicine as a real malady, the passionate craving of the land-locked sailor for his wide, billowy home--the sea.

Long before his coming up to hospital, I had noted this mild-mannered convict, and had heard his story from official lips.

By his correct demeanour, and careful adherence to prison rules, he had found favour in the sight of the warden, who tacitly gave him such sympathy as, without in the least palliating crime, may be bestowed even upon a murderer, when his fatal act is the unfortunate result of momentary frenzy, and does not indicate innate depravity.

Henderson, being a creature of superabundant vitality, it is but inch by inch that he has physically succumbed to an environment absolutely antipodal to both temperament and training. Naturally reserved and reticent, he seldom complained; but, on a certain day, when the scent of some foreign fruit that I had brought him may have stirred within him old memories of tropical seas and gracious sunny lands, he gave voice to his yearning. It was on a prison reception-day, and I was his "visitor;" and long after, when the end came, I remembered his words, and thanked God that he had at last given this long-denied being the desire of his soul.

"Yes, lady," he said, "I was born and reared on the sea, my mother being a sea-captain's wife, and at the time making the round voyage with my father. Why! even _now_" he murmured passionately, "I could cross the Atlantic in my shirt-sleeves, lady, but _here_! in a close, damp cell! My God! I shiver with cold, and moan and fret like a sick baby. Often, of a night, I cannot sleep for thought of it all. I pace my den hour after hour, like a caged beast. I cry to Heaven, the sea! the sea! Almighty God, give me but once more to look upon it, to smell brine, to see a ship bound bravely over its broad billows! After that, let what will come, I can die content."

From the slow monotony of the prison shoe-shop, Henderson has, at last, been released by ill-health, and is now permanently established in the hospital; and, dismal though it be to find oneself a tenant of a hospital cell, and facing the blank certainty that there is for him no egress, save by that final inexorable door opening into the blind unknown, he is comparatively happy. So sweet is the merest taste of liberty to long-denied lips!

Now he may, hour by hour, stroll in the prison-yard, brightened in summer by its small oasis of verdure and bloom (the flowerbeds), and, in winter, still wholesomely sweet with keen, bracing air and genial sunshine. The old sea-longing still haunts his enfeebled mind; but now, it is a thing to be borne. He has outlived the fierce vehemence of human desire; and, with little positive suffering, is slowly wearing away of lingering consumption, complicated with incurable disease of the heart.

* * * * *

The prison clock is on the stroke of nine, and the prison itself (already in its nightcap) composes itself for a long night's rest.

In the deserted guard-room and along the now empty corridors, silence undisturbedly reigns. Here in the hospital the quiet of the hour is less unbroken. Five consumptives (as is their wont, poor fellows!) will cough the slow night away; and, in yonder cell, a man, with a great carbuncle under his ear, groans, *_sotto-voce_*, at every breath.

On the second floor, in the large cell or room at the head of the stairway (which is, as occasion requires, used for the sick, for the holding of prison inquests, or for an operating-room, and but one of whose several cots is now occupied), a convict is dying. He has been long about it, for his vitality is tremendous. In his single body there would seem to be the makings of, at least, two centenarians.

Nature, however, *_makes_* us men, and the devil *_mars_* them. And here, before the coming of his first gray hair, lies the sin-spoilt material for a brisk old patriarch of a hundred years!

He is not, however, to be lightly put out of existence. Even this nefarious old prison does not readily dispatch him. Consumption, the chosen "red slayer" of its "slain," he flouts with his last fluttering breath.

This daring and desperate sinner has proved himself, even under the disadvantages of restraint, a splendid villain. Unweariedly indefatigable in his efforts to regain his forfeited liberty, and, prolific of resources to that end, his custody (even when in close confinement) has sorely vexed the official soul. By repeated assaults upon his fellow convicts and the prison officers (for which sanguinary purpose he has fashioned the deadliest weapons from the most inconceivable of articles), he has well-nigh lost all claim on human sympathy; and the entire prison community has long since given him over to his diabolic possessor. Failing health, and its attendant necessities, have partially subdued this fierce, unresting spirit; but even now, in the last stage of consumption, unable to lift himself from his pillow, and already on the solemn outskirts of an unknown

world, the abnormal evil is yet strong within him. For a past day or two he has been delirious; and though far too wasted to require physical restraint, he is, even in his helplessness, half terrible. The passing soul still revels amid remembered scenes of debauch, or gloats upon the foul details of crime. The night-watcher's labour is here one of love; yet, tender as the convict is to his ailing comrade, this dying wretch scarce appeals to his humanity; and night-watching zeal is, in this case, inconveniently cool. Robert Henderson--who in this favouring month of June somewhat renews his failing strength--has kindly volunteered to sit up to-night with this unpopular patient. The superintendent, ever ready to encourage good intent, and scarce aware of Henderson's unfitness for the hard mental strain of a lonely night beside so uncanny a death-bed, accedes to his request, and at nine o'clock he takes his place in the dismal apartment. The cells are, as is customary, secured for the night. The superintendent leaves the hospital; the cook, who, with his attendant, is also a hospital nurse, retires to his rest; and Henderson, locked in, is left alone with his charge. It chances to be his first watch beside a dying bed, and an exceptionally trying one it proves.

As he listens to the muttered ravings of this frenzied creature, he already half regrets the humane impulse that tempted him to brave the horrors of such a night. An hour passes. The man raves on. Terrors, vague and supernatural, begin to seize upon the watcher's unnerved mind. Surely already evil fiends are swooping on their prey--the parting soul! And in the silence that now alternates with these fierce outbreaks of insanity, he half fancies in the dusky room the whirr of their uncanny wings. He wishes to God it were morning, and he well out of this! The night, however, has scarce begun; and so, manfully bracing himself to his task, he resolves to stick to his post, doing his best, let what will come. Suddenly the patient ceases to rave, and seems to struggle gaspingly with some strong and terrible foe!

White foam flecks his blue lips, and great beads of agony start to his brow. Hurrying to his side, Henderson tenderly wipes the pain-distorted forehead, and offers him drink. His teeth are fast clenched. He makes a rude attempt to drive the comforter from him. Obeying the motion, Henderson seats himself and awaits the issue.

By and by the convulsive gasping ceases. Again he bends over the

sufferer. How strangely quiet the man is! No motion, no sound--not even a breath! Heaven help him! he has gone at last!

How dismal will the long night be locked in here alone with a corpse! Death sits horribly on these evil features. Upon the hard, set face, one may still trace the footprints of unholy and unbridled desire. The mouth is much drawn. Its strong white teeth show grimly between the blue parted lips, and, to the watcher's nervous fancy, they seem, even in death, to snarl viciously at the beholder. Livid circles underline the sunken eyes, now wide and glassy, beneath their heavy brows, and, as Henderson morbidly conceives, turned wrathfully upon him. If he could but close those terrible eyes! Alas! he dare not with his shaky hand attempt so bold a thing! A moment ago he could have turned his back upon the ugly sight; now it is too late. By some hypnotic fascination beyond his control, his gaze is riveted to the corpse.

The slow hours wear on. The living and the dead, set face to face, grimly confront each other. The dead man never winces. The living man, at last, succumbs to the stress and horror of the situation. The walls of the apartment reel and totter. The corpse dims and fades before him, and he falls limp and unconscious to the floor.

Sensation gradually returning to the overwrought watcher, he finds himself still miserably faint and weak. It is, however, something to have escaped the spell of those death-glazed eyes, and, thanking God, he strives to get upon his feet. In his effort to rise, he stumbles clumsily over a small dark object upon the floor, close beside the bed. Regaining his poise, he discerns that it is the coarse, heavy shoe of a convict. He lifts it, thinking to place it beside its fellow beneath the cot. His hand is weak and nerveless. It escapes his grasp, and falls clattering to the floor. As it strikes, his ear is surprised by the click of some metallic substance. A small shining implement lies at his feet. He picks it up. It is a miniature steel saw, and must somehow have been concealed in this shoe of the dead man. Curiously examining it and the shoe, he discovers (what in the dim light had at first eluded his notice) a displaced inner sole, thin, but firm and nicely fitted. Removing it, he sees that the shoe is still intact, and that this neatly adjusted super-sole was but an ingenious blind, adroitly concealing the precious implement, which, had fate proved less unkind, should have opened to the dead prisoner

the long untrodden way of liberty.

It is not in Robert Henderson's nature to peach on a comrade, living or dead, and, carefully restoring the saw to its hiding-place, he readjusts the sham sole, and, with a touch of that reverence which one instinctively yields to the belongings of the dead, puts the shoe aside.

Still weak and trembling, but no longer magnetically drawn to the corpse, he totters to the grated window, which, to eke out the sick man's failing breath, has been left open. Dropping upon the rude stool beside it, he leans his yet dizzy head upon the sill. A wandering breath of the summer night steals gently in. How balmy it is, this tender night wind! And he, a worn creature at a prison grating, might be a gentle lady at her lattice, so softly it caresses his wasted cheek!

Yet, kindly as it is, it does not wholly restore his wonted vigour. At intervals, a deathly faintness oppresses him. A fearful sinking of heart and limb, as if life and courage were, together, oozing away. What if the end were indeed come, and he were to die to-night, unattended and alone; his filmy eyes looking their last upon earth, still confronted by that odious dead face, that, even in the world beyond, may still pursue him, as, for years, _another_ dead face has!

His heart scarce beats at all! Ah, well, it is time he should be gone! But to die alone! Were daylight but here, he might summon help--might get from the dispensary some relieving draught, or soothing powder, wherewith to blunt the dreaded sting of Death.

A sudden thought flashes through his troubled brain. There, just beside the dead man's bed, stands his medicine! A small phial half-filled with dark-brown liquid; he read its label, idly, as he sat beside the sufferer--"Cough Drops." Summoning such strength as he can command, he staggers across the room, and, eagerly seizing the phial, drains it to the dregs. This composite remedy is well-freighted with morphine, and, though perfectly safe in moderate doses, is by no means to be administered _ad libitum_. Opium, as we know, is dual in effect, inducing irregular and excited brain action, as well as coma. This over-liberal potion of "Cough Drops" works swift wonders in

Henderson's sensitive, excitable organism. He is soon upon his feet again, and, as he says gaily to himself, "As bright as ever, and well-nigh as strong." A sensuous delight in existence again thrills his torpid being; a wild eager craving to taste once more its long withheld joy! "Die to-night? Ah, no! How _could_ he have imagined a thing so unlikely? He is but a young man yet, and life lies long and pleasant before him. Stimulated by his energizing draught, he presses eagerly to the window, and, grasping its hindering bars,--in a spurt of the old-time Herculean strength,--wrenches at them mightily. They are fast and strong. In the scuttle they are wider apart, and, apparently, more slender. The summer wind steals deliciously in. Ah! these are but mere thimblefuls. Outside, now, a man might take his fill. The old sea longing is again hot within him. Outside these cruel bars it lies, broad and fair, as of old. The whole wide world is there! Liberty, happiness, and maybe health. At least, leave to die outside of prison walls.

"Why! Men smothering in subterranean dungeons have, like burrowing moles, groped their slow way to freedom; while he"--a swift thought illumines his seething brain, sending the life-tide swifter through his pulses, and electrifying his entire being! The saw! the dead man's saw! There it is, safe in the shoe, and not in vain has Heaven graciously discovered it to him! Still reverent of the belongings of the dead, he takes in his hand the precious shoe, removes from it the secreted implement, and, in a moment more, is eagerly at work. Noiselessly placing a small table beneath the scuttle, he finds it still beyond his reach. Placing a stool upon the table, he mounts it, and is soon sawing away at the bars above him. In this aperture, designed rather for sanitary than illuminating purposes, the bars are comparatively wide apart, and far more slender than the window gratings. The removal of a single bar will give egress to his emaciated form. The saw works well. His task is soon accomplished,--the dead man all the while (as he excitedly fancies) angrily staring from the bed. Faugh! How close the air is in this infernal place! A moment ago he was fast here, locked in with a horrible thing that grins and glares at a man, and is already decomposing! It is over now. In a moment more, he will have left it all; will be free. The coarse covering of an empty cot is soon torn into strong strips. Deftly knotting these together, sailor-wise, he tucks the improvised rope under his arm, and, holding it fast, climbs

out upon the roof, and, creeping cautiously on all fours to its extremity, has secured it firmly to the spout.

Clinging desperately to his flimsy tackle, he lowers himself, hand over hand, to its end. He is still at a remove of twenty feet from the ground.

Under normal mental conditions, Henderson might have demurred at so bold a fall; now, no whit appalled, he loosens his hold, and drops, scarcely bruised, to the earth. Kissing in ecstasy the clammy ground, he looks mutely up to heaven. It is a prayer! And, rising to his feet, he hastily puts off his heavy shoes (which in the hurry and excitement of departure he has forgotten to remove), and, listening intently for the night watchman's patrolling step, assures himself that he is at this moment reconnoitering some distant stretch of his beat. Now is the time! Stealthily gaining the wall, he looks cautiously about him; selecting a spot comfortably distant from a sentry-box, with a pile of refuse lumber and some empty lime barrels, providentially at hand, he improvises a rude scaffolding, and, eagerly mounting it, clambers in safety to the top.

A neighbouring clock is striking two. The night is cloudy. There will be no moon, and not a star to be seen. It is an easy thing to manage the rest; and, well beyond the prison walls, it cannot be far to that goal of his longing--the sea.

Safe, though somewhat shaken by his bold fall, he finds his legs and pushes resolutely on. He moves but slowly. Through long disuse, his locomotion has become rusty; yet, keeping steadily to his snail-like pace, he threads the deserted streets, and presently finds himself upon the broad highway. He has grasped his clew; and, following it, presses bravely on. The shoeless feet, already hurt and bleeding, get wearily over the rough, hard ground. The clouds are breaking; and, here and there, a kindly star twinkles upon his pathway.

His spurious strength--opium-engendered and ephemerally sustained by this new wine of liberty--is waning.

The road lies long before him. He drags wearily on. He stumbles often, and once has even fallen from sheer exhaustion. At last he

diverges, instinctively, from the travelled highway. Another weary pull. Now on a scarce-rutted wagon track, across open grassy flats, and then a sudden pause--a thrill of ecstatic joy! The salt sea-breeze is in his eager nostrils! "O God! O blessed God! it is the sea!" and for eighteen weary years he has not once "snuffed brine!" He hears it, singing in the dear old monotone; and, in a moment more, here it is, spread out before him, grand as ever, and wide! Oh, how wide!

Tottering feebly across the sands down to its very foam-fringed edge, he sinks tremblingly upon his knees, and in ecstasy hugs the wet shore. His strained muscles relax, and, too spent to rise, he stretches himself upon the strand. His brain is hazy with morphine. A drowsy bliss balms his tired senses. He looks dreamily at the broad heaven (already flushed with coming day), and, fondly searching its half-forgotten face, mutters drowsily to himself: "What! all that sky? How wide the world is!" He closes his eyes for the moment, oppressed with the weight of immensity! His mood changes suddenly to one of eager, childish delight. Far out at sea, through the soft bloom of dawn's red rose, the sun is emerging from his bath of flame, a huge disk of fire. Raising himself wearily upon his elbow, he watches its unaccustomed face with curious half-recognition. "The sun? yes, this must be the sun! Ages ago he saw it rise out of the sea. Somebody was with him then. Who was it? His name was--what was his name? and where is he now?"

"Dead, maybe. Everybody is dead--everybody--Tom, and the other left behind there in the grated pen! He, too, may be dying. He is faint and weary, and has so little breath after that long tramp! Ah, well! he is close to his mother now, and where else should a man die? He is tired, though--dog tired, and must rest awhile before he heaves anchor." The tide is rising. A dash of salt spray spatters his cheek. The sun comes bravely up from the sea; and, yonder, a ship is coming in. In dreamy abstraction he watches it with half-shut eyes. "How drowsy he is! How came he here? Where is he going? What a coil it is! No matter, he is going to sleep now; and by and by he will wake up, and get his bearings. It is all right--all well--he is in her arms! How beautiful she is--the blue-eyed mother! And--hush! hark! she is singing him to sleep!" His mind wanders. He murmurs irrelevantly on--"Poor mother! She is pale and worn! It will grieve her if her boy turns in without a prayer." He tries to fumble to his knees, and

fails. Recomposing his limbs, he folds his large hands, childwise, upon his breast, and distinctly and reverently repeats the old, old prayer--

"Now I lay me down to sleep,
I pray the Lord my soul to keep,
If I should die before I wake
I pray the Lord--"

"Good night, mother--" He is fast asleep.

* * * * *

Henderson has chanced upon an unfrequented strip of shore, and, though it is now high day, no one comes, not even his pursuers, who, in the coarse stiff grass must have missed his shoeless trail.

The tide is still coming in. He does not waken. Now and then an intrusive wave breaks over his feet. By and by one creeps up to his waist; and, directly, the sea gives him a broad, rough douche. He moans, and starts in his dream. Another wave! How strong and fierce it is--this sea--held in the hollow of God's safe hand!

It rouses him at last. He starts to his feet, and towering, for one brief moment, high above the seething waves, sends over the blue expanse a long, loud "Ship ahoy!" Then, shading his eyes with his thin hand, he gazes eagerly expectant--far out to sea. A slow smile breaks, like the dawn, over his face, and, folding his arms, he waits. The waves come curling in, and, breaking at his feet, ruthlessly drench him with foam and spray. He does not heed them. With straining gaze, he waits that inbound phantasmal ship. Another and a happier smile! And, with a keen cry of joy, he waves his eager hand and again sends over the sea a jubilant "Ship ahoy!" He makes a forward pace or two--a wave is coming in, huge and hungry; he sways, totters, and falls. It swallows him and hurries back. And still the sea lies broad and blue beneath the smiling heaven. The white gull skims its azure breast on rhythmic wing. Proud ships bring happy ventures gaily in; or, sailing out and on, dwindle to specks and melt at last, like shapeless dreams, into the distant blue. And still the curling waves creep with slow singing up the sand. With _him_ "there is no more sea!"

NEPTUNE. by H. A. Guerber

From *Myths of Greece and Rome*

When Jupiter assigned to each of his brothers a separate portion of the universe, he decreed that Neptune, or Poseidon, should govern all the waters upon the face of the earth, and be sole monarch of the ocean.

"Neptune, the mighty marine god, I sing;
Earth's mover, and the fruitless ocean's king.
That Helicon and th' Ægean deeps dost hold.
O thou earth-shaker; thy command, twofold
The gods have sorted; making thee of horses
The awful tamer, and of naval forces
The sure preserver. Hail, O Saturn's birth!
Whose graceful green hair circles all the earth.
Bear a benign mind; and thy helpful hand
Lend all, submitted to thy dread command."

Homer (Chapman's tr.).

Before this new ruler made his appearance, the Titan Oceanus had wielded the scepter of the sea; and regretfully he now resigned it to his youthful supplanter, whom he nevertheless admired sincerely, and described in glowing colors to his brothers.

"Have ye beheld the young God of the Seas,
My dispossessor? Have ye seen his face?
Have ye beheld his chariot, foam'd along
By noble winged creatures he hath made?
I saw him on the calmed waters scud,
With such a glow of beauty in his eyes,
That it enforc'd me to bid sad farewell
To all my empire."

Keats.

Neptune, the personification as well as the god of the sea, was of an exceedingly encroaching disposition. Dissatisfied with the portion allotted him, he once conspired to dethrone Jupiter; but, unfortunately for the success of his undertaking, his plot was discovered before he could put it into execution, and Jupiter, in punishment for his temerity, exiled him to earth. There he was condemned to build the walls of Troy for Laomedon, king of that city, who, in return, promised a handsome compensation.

Apollo, also banished from heaven at that time, volunteered to aid Neptune by playing on his lyre, and moving the stones by the power of sweet sounds (p. 65). The task satisfactorily ended, Laomedon, an avaricious and dishonest king, refused the promised guerdon, whereupon Neptune created a terrible monster, which came upon the shore, devoured the inhabitants, devastated everything within his reach, and inspired all with great terror.

"A great serpent from the deep,
Lifting his horrible head above their homes,
Devoured the children."

Lewis Morris.

To save themselves from the awful death which threatened them all, the Trojans consulted an oracle, who advised the sacrifice of a beautiful virgin, and promised the monster would disappear as soon as he had devoured the appointed victim.

A young girl was therefore chosen by lot, led down to the seashore, and chained by the priest's own hands to a slimy rock. As soon as her mourning friends had forsaken her, the hideous serpent came out of his lair in the waves, and devoured her; then he vanished, and nothing more was heard of him for a whole year, at the end of which time he reappeared, and resumed his former depredations, which were only checked by the sacrifice of a second virgin.

Year after year, however, he returned, and year after year a fair girl was doomed to perish, until finally the lot fell upon Hesione, the king's only daughter. He could not bear the thought of the terrible fate awaiting her, and tried every means in his power to save her. As

a last resort he sent heralds to publish far and wide that the king would give a great reward to any man who would dare attack and succeed in slaying the monster.

Hercules, on his return from the scene of one of his stupendous labors, heard the proclamation, and, with no other weapon than the oaken club he generally carried, slew the monster just as he was about to drag poor Hesione down into his slimy cave. Laomedon was, of course, overjoyed at the monster's death, but, true to his nature, again refused the promised reward, and by his dishonesty incurred the hatred and contempt of this hero also. Some time after, having finished his time of servitude with Eurystheus, Hercules, aided by a chosen band of adventurers, came to Troy to punish him for his perfidy. The city was stormed and taken, the king slain, and his wife and children carried to Greece as captives. There Hesione became the bride of Telamon; while her brother Podarces, later known as Priam, was redeemed by his people and made King of Troy.

Laomedon's failure to pay his just debts was the primary cause of the enmity which Apollo and Neptune displayed towards the Trojans during their famous war with the Greeks (p. 305).

Their term of exile ended, the gods were reinstated in their exalted positions, and hastened to resume their former occupations; but, in spite of the severe lesson just received, Neptune was not yet cured of his grasping tendencies. Not long after his return from Troy, he quarreled with Minerva for the possession of the then recently founded city of Athens, then nameless, and entered into the memorable contest in which he was signally defeated (p. 57). He also disputed the sovereignty of Trœzene with Minerva, and that of Corinth with Apollo. In the latter instance, the disputants having chosen Briareus as umpire, the prize was awarded to him as the most powerful of all the gods except Jupiter.

As god of the sea, Neptune did not generally remain in Olympus, but dwelt way down in the coral caves of his kingdom, over which he ruled with resistless sway. By one word he could stir up or calm the wildest storm, and cause the billows to roar with fury or subside into peaceful ripples.

"He spake, and round about him called the clouds
And roused the ocean,--wielding in his hand
The trident,--summoned all the hurricanes
Of all the winds, and covered earth and sky
At once with mists, while from above the night
Fell suddenly."

Homer (Bryant's tr.).

The rivers, fountains, lakes, and seas were not only subject to his rule, but he could also cause terrible earthquakes at will, and, when he pleased, raise islands from the deep, as he did when Latona entreated him to shelter her from Juno's persecutions (p. 62).

Neptune is said to have loved the goddess Ceres, and to have followed her during her prolonged search for her daughter, Proserpina. Annoyed by his persistent wooing, the goddess, to escape him, assumed the form of a mare; but the God of the Sea, not at all deceived by this stratagem, straightway assumed the form of a horse, in which guise he contentedly trotted after her and renewed his attentions.

The offspring of this equine pair was Arion, a wonderful winged steed, gifted with the power of speech, whose early education was intrusted to the Nereides. They trained him to draw his father's chariot over the waves with incredible rapidity, and parted with him regretfully when he was given to Copreus, Pelops' son. This marvelous horse passed successively into Hercules' and Adrastus' hands; and the latter won all the chariot races, thanks to his fleetness.

On another occasion, Neptune, having fallen deeply in love with a maiden named Theophane, and fearful lest some one of her numerous suitors should find favor in her eyes before he had time to urge his wooing, suddenly changed her into a sheep, and conveyed her to the Island of Crumissa, where he assumed the guise of a ram, and, in this metamorphosed condition, carried on his courtship, which eventually proved successful. The offspring of this union was the golden-fleeced ram which bore Phryxus in safety to the Colchian shores, and whose pelt was the goal of the Argonautic expedition (p. 265).

Neptune also loved and married Medusa in the days of her youth and

beauty, and when some drops of blood fell from her severed head into the salt sea foam, he produced from them the graceful winged steed Pegasus (p. 244).

Neptune is also said to be the father of the giants Otus and Ephialtes, of Neleus, Pelias, and Polyphemus.

The Queen of the Ocean, Neptune's own true and lawful wife, was a Nereid, one of the fifty daughters of Doris and Nereus,--the personification of the calm and sunlit aspect of the sea. Her name was Amphitrite, or Salacia. At first she was in great awe of her distinguished suitor, and in her fear fled at his approach, leaving him no chance to admire any of her charms, except the grace and celerity with which she managed to flit, or rather glide, out of his sight.

"Along the deep
With beauteous ankles, Amphitrite glides."

Hesiod (Elton's tr.).

This conduct grieved Neptune so sorely, that he sent a dolphin to plead his cause, and persuade the fair nymph to share his throne. The messenger, carefully instructed beforehand, carried out the directions with such skill, that Amphitrite formally consented to become Neptune's wife.

The King of the Deep was so overjoyed at these good tidings, that he transferred the dolphin to the sky, where he forms a well-known constellation. Neptune and Amphitrite in due time became the happy parents of several children, among whom the most celebrated is Triton, whose body was half man and half fish, and who gave his name to all his male descendants.

Like all other gods, Neptune took a lively interest in men's affairs, and sometimes interfered in their behalf. On one occasion, for instance, he even lent his beautiful chariot to a youth by the name of Idas, who, loving a maiden dearly, and unable to win her father's consent to their union, had resolved to kidnap her. Marpessa, for such was the lady's name, allowed herself to be carried off without

protest; and the lovers were blissfully speeding along in Neptune's chariot, when her father, Evenus, perceiving their escape, started in pursuit of them. In spite of the most strenuous efforts, he could not overtake the fleeing pair, and in his anger plunged into a river, where he was drowned, and which from him received the name of Evenus.

Idas and Marpessa were just congratulating themselves upon their narrow escape, when suddenly Apollo appeared before them, and, checking their steeds, declared he loved the maiden too, and would not tamely yield her up to a rival.

This was quite equivalent to a challenge; and Idas, stepping down from the chariot, was about to engage in the fight, when suddenly out of a clear sky a thunderbolt came crashing down to earth, and an imperious voice was heard to declare that the quarrel could be settled by Marpessa only, and that she should freely choose the suitor she preferred as husband.

The maiden glanced at both her lovers, and quickly reviewed their respective attractions. Remembering that Apollo, being immortal, would retain all his youthful bloom when her more ephemeral beauty had vanished, and that he would then probably cease to love her, she held out her hand to Idas, declaring she preferred to link her fate to that of a mortal, who would grow old when she did, and love her as long as they both lived. This choice was approved by Jupiter; and the lovers, after reaching a place of safety, returned the wondrous chariot to Neptune, with many grateful thanks for his timely aid.

[All the Nereides, Tritons, and lesser sea divinities formed a part of Neptune and Amphitrite's train, and followed closely when they rode forth to survey their kingdom.

Neptune had, besides this, many subordinates, whose duty it was to look after various seas, lakes, rivers, fountains, etc., confided to their special care. In harmony with their occupations, these divinities were either hoary river gods (such as Father Nile), slender youths, beautiful maidens, or little babbling children. They seldom left the cool waves of their appointed dwellings, and strove to win Neptune's approbation mostly by the zeal they showed in the discharge of their various duties.

Proteus, too, another inferior deity, had the care of the flocks of the deep, and he always attended Neptune when it was safe to leave his great herds of sea calves to bask on the sunny shores.

"In ages past old Proteus, with his droves
Of sea calves, sought the mountains and the groves."

Cowper.

In common with all the other gods, Proteus enjoyed the gift of prophecy, and had the power to assume any shape he pleased. The former gift he was wont to exercise very reluctantly; and when mortals wished to consult him, he would change his form with bewildering rapidity, and, unless they clung to him through all his changes, they could obtain no answer to their questions.

"Shouting [we] seize the god: our force t' evade,
His various arts he soon resumes in aid:
A lion now, he curls a surgy mane;
Sudden, our hands a spotted pard restrain;
Then, arm'd with tusks, and lightning in his eyes,
A boar's obscener shape the god belies:
On spiry volumes, there, a dragon rides;
Here, from our strict embrace a stream he glides;
And last, sublime, his stately growth he rears,
A tree, and well-dissembled foliage wears."

Homer (Pope's tr.).

But if these manifestations proved unavailing to drive his would-be hearers away, the god answered every question circumstantially.

Amphitrite, Neptune's wife,--generally represented as a beautiful nude nymph, crowned with seaweed, and reclining in a pearl-shell chariot drawn by dolphins, or sea-horses,--was worshiped with her husband.

Neptune, majestic and middle-aged, with long, flowing hair and beard, wearing a seaweed crown, and brandishing a trident, or three-pronged

fork, was widely worshiped throughout Greece and Italy, and had countless shrines. His principal votaries were the seamen and horse trainers, who often bespoke his aid.

"Hail, Neptune, greatest of the gods!
Thou ruler of the salt sea floods;
Thou with the deep and dark-green hair,
That dost the golden trident bear;
Thou that, with either arm outspread,
Embosomest the earth we tread:
Thine are the beasts with fin and scales,
That round thy chariot, as it sails,
Plunging and tumbling, fast and free,
All reckless follow o'er the sea."

Arion.

Many large temples were dedicated exclusively to the worship of Neptune, and games were frequently celebrated in his honor. The most noted of all were undoubtedly the Isthmian Games,--a national festival, held every four years at Corinth, on the isthmus of the same name. Hither people came from all points of the compass, and all parts of the then known world, either to witness or to take part in the noted wrestling, boxing, and racing matches, or in the musical and poetical contests.

PASSAGES FROM THE JOURNAL OF A SOCIAL WRECK_

BY MARGARET FLOYD

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January 13th, 188-.--Twenty-nine to-day, with two painful facts staring me blankly in the face. I am reduced almost literally to my last cent, and have no prospect of increasing this sum. For the first time in my life I may as well examine the situation impartially. It is not my fault that it is a physical impossibility for me to get up early in the morning, and therefore that I never have stayed in any office more than two or three weeks at the longest. It is constitutional. I can't write a good hand, or keep books correctly, for the same reason. Mathematics were left out of my composition. I must smoke, and it is impossible for me to smoke a poor cigar. If I am in debt for cigars, as well as other necessities, how can I help it? I would willingly work if I could only find the kind of work that would suit me. I am not a fool. There is not a man in New York who speaks French with a better accent than I do. I can sing better than most amateurs. There is no vanity in saying that people consider me good-looking. I don't find it difficult to please when I make an effort, and yet I am a complete failure. It is not my fault. I'm a round peg in a square hole. I ought to have been the oldest son of a duke, with a large allowance. Instead, I am a helpless orphan, with nothing a year. I seem to joke; in reality I am in despair. Fortunately, my landlady trusts me blindly, or I would be turned into the street.

I have sold or pawned all my valuables. I might pawn my dress suit and studs, but if I did, I couldn't go out to dinner if I were asked, and that is always a saving. I cannot get a place in an opera company, because my voice has not been sufficiently trained. There always is something to prevent my success, no matter what I try.

To-day I met Morton in the street. He stopped me and said: "By the way, Valentine, your name will come up at the Amsterdam very soon. You are sure to get in."

Imagine paying club dues in my present condition! Yet to belong to the Amsterdam has been one of my ambitions. I had to get out of it, and

said, in an offhand way: "Ah, thanks, Morton, but you may as well take my name off the list. I'm thinking of living out of town."

So I am--I think of occupying six feet of real estate in the country, if something doesn't happen soon. Morton always irritates me. He is one of those prosperous, fortunate creatures, always so completely _the thing_, that I feel hopelessly my own deficiencies.

January 15th.--Something _has_ happened. I have an idea. It strikes me as strange, yet feasible. When I came in this afternoon I found a letter lying on my table. I opened it; it ran as follows:

"NEW YORK, January 14, 188-

"Families who are about to give receptions, dinner parties, or other entertainments will be gratified to know that persons who will assist in making these events pleasant and enjoyable can be obtained through the medium of the Globe Employment Bureau. These persons will not be professionals, but parties of culture and refinement, who will appear well, dress elegantly, and mingle with the guests, while able and willing to play, sing, converse fluently, tell a good story, give a recitation, or anything that will help to make an evening pass pleasantly.

"The Globe Employment Bureau in this plan simply complies with the increasing demands of a large class of its patrons. The attendance of these persons, young or old, can be had for the sum of fifteen dollars per evening each. We will guarantee them to be strictly honorable and reliable persons. Respectfully yours,

"THE GLOBE EMPLOYMENT BUREAU."

The idea amused me. I moralized on it as a phase of New York society; wondered what sort of people would employ these individuals; wondered what the individuals would feel like themselves; smiled grimly at the inference that I could go to the expense of fifteen dollars to procure the services of one of the persons. While I stood with the letter in my hand, a thought flashed into my mind. It widened and developed,

until now it possesses my whole being. I can't hire a Globe young man, but anything is better than starvation: I will _be_ a Globe young man!

January 18th.--It is all settled, and I am in the service of the New York Globe. After two days of hesitation, I presented myself this morning at the Globe office. I was shown to the Employment Bureau, and there, through a little grating, I was interviewed by a young clerk of supernatural composure. He had a cool discerning eye that seemed to read my very soul, and take in my situation and errand at a glance. I produced the Globe letter as the simplest method of introducing myself.

He looked at me with his discriminating expression. "Let me see," he murmured. "We have had three thousand applications since the day before yesterday, and our list is complete. But six feet--blonde--good-looking--distinguished, in fact"--he bit the handle of his pen meditatively. His air of reflection changed to one of decision. "Just follow me, please," he concluded.

I followed him through a dim passage to a little room where there was a piano with some music on it. Standing beside the piano was a small dark man, rubbing his hands and bowing politely as we entered. It reminded me of one of the torture chambers of the Inquisition. What were they going to do to me?

The chief inquisitor, in the shape of the clerk, began the ceremonies by saying: "I suppose you would not have come here without being able to fill the requirements of the Globe circular. Be kind enough to sit down and sing and play that song."

It proved to be "In the Gloaming." I was in good voice, and managed to sing it with some expression.

"Bravo!" said the second inquisitor, in the shape of the little dark man.

He then took me in hand. He proved to be an Italian, and asked me questions in Italian and French, in both of which languages I answered as well as I could. I was then obliged to sing pathetic songs, drinking songs, comic songs, opéra bouffe, English ballads, and

then--worse than all--requested to recite some dramatic poetry. Here I was at sea. I confessed that I knew none.

"Never mind," said the clerk, encouragingly; "you have done remarkably well in other respects, and you can easily learn the regulation pieces."

He handed me a list, beginning with "Curfew shall not ring To-night" and "The Charge of the Light Brigade," and ending with "Betsy and I are Out" and "The May Queen." I choked down my rising resentment. What wouldn't I do for fifteen dollars an evening, short of crime?

"Very well," I said, obediently.

I was led out of the torture chamber, exhausted, but still living. It is queer. I feel shaky. I had to give them my own name. I found that there was no getting out of this. They said that the whole matter was strictly in confidence. They required references, and I had taken the precaution to bring several letters of recommendation from well-known business men--letters that had been given to me a short while before when I was trying to get a situation in a business house down town. These were satisfactory as to my character.

I have put the halter around my own neck now.

N.B.--Suppose Morton were to find this out!

January 20th.--I have had my first experience in my new character. I had been told to be ready every afternoon by five o'clock for orders. Yesterday, about six in the afternoon, I received a message from the Globe, directing me to go to a house in East Seventy-fourth Street, near Fifth Avenue, at nine o'clock that evening, and submit myself to the orders of Mr. Q. K. Slater. It was a consoling thought that I had never heard of Mr. Q. K. Slater, and that East Seventy-fourth Street was an unknown region to me.

Punctually at nine that evening I found myself in the large parlor of a house in Seventy-fourth Street, brightly lighted, and filled with people. The centre of the room was cleared, and several people were dancing to the strains of a band. Near the door stood a tall imposing

gentleman with gray whiskers, and a lady in full evening dress. Doubtless my hosts, or rather my proprietors.

What was I to do? How were they to know who and what I was? As I stood hesitating, I found that their eyes were fixed upon me with a significant glance. I immediately went toward them. To my astonishment the lady greeted me by my name with the utmost suavity.

"Good-evening, Mr. Valentine," she said. "I am delighted to see you."

Mr. Slater murmured something that sounded like "How do you do?"

I said that I was delighted to meet--see them. Mrs. Slater turned to another lady standing near her.

"Mrs. Raggles, _do_ let me introduce Mr. Valentine. We were so afraid that he would not be able to come."

While I talked as well as I could to Mrs. Raggles, I surreptitiously observed my host and hostess. Mr. Slater looked uncomfortable. There was a consciousness in his uneasy manner that if I was a sham, so was he. I feared that he might give us both away before the evening was over. Mrs. Slater, on the contrary, soared above any feeling of this sort. Her party was to be a success; that was evidently her principal object. What a comfort this was to me! I felt safe in her hands. Of course it was as much of an object to her as to me to conceal the fact that I was not a _bona fide_ invited guest. I took my cue at once. Avoid Mr. Slater; arrange matters in such a way that Mrs. Slater could engineer me through the evening. All the time I had a sensation that in avoiding Mr. Slater I was avoiding an old and tried friend. There was something strangely familiar in his face; in the almost courtly wave of his hand as he directed his guests to the refreshment-room; in his protecting manner as he walked about, first with one lady, then with another. I cannot recall distinctly the events of the evening. I have a confused impression of lights, flowers, music, and people, much like any other party, yet with certain differences. The dressing was not in particularly good taste, and the German was managed in a most extraordinary manner. At eleven o'clock the man who was to lead it came forward with a hat containing scraps of paper. I noticed that all the men went up and drew a slip of paper. They examined it, and

retired into the crowd. I couldn't imagine what this ceremony meant, and felt sure that when my turn came I should make some frightful blunder. As I thought this, I found Mrs. Slater beside me. She hurriedly explained to me that this party was one of a series of Germans given at the houses of her friends, and that there had been some feeling on the part of certain young ladies because others had been oftener asked to dance the German and drive home afterward than they had. In order to obviate this a system of lots had been arranged, by which chance alone decided the matter. "Each young gentleman," concluded Mrs. Slater, "can bring any young lady that he wishes to the party; but he is expected to go home with the lady whom he draws for the German. I hope you understand what is expected of you. You dance, of course?" she added, with a slightly stern manner--the manner of a proprietor. I said that I could.

Accordingly I drew my lot, and found myself the partner of a pretty girl, who proved to be the daughter of Mrs. Raggles.

This is my journal; no one will ever see it; I can be honest. I impressed Miss Raggles. I think I impressed every one that I met. I realized that on the mere making a good impression depended my success in the future. To talk, to dance, to flirt, to eat ice-cream, at the rate of three or four dollars an hour--for the present this was my profession. Why not elevate it, glorify it, by doing these things better than any one else had ever done them? There was an exhilaration in the thought. It positively inspired me. I was in constant demand, and was presented to almost every one. Toward the end of the evening Mrs. Slater asked me to sing. I thought it odd for a large party, but I sang my best. One thing damped my spirits. I had been standing in the doorway, when I suddenly became aware of two waiters who were whispering together at a short distance. In a lull of the music their words reached me.

"Which did yer say he was?" said one in a loud whisper.

"That's him--him there by the door, the good-lookin' fellow. Looks as if he didn't have nothin' in the world to do but stand there all the evening," answered the other.

"You don't say!" ejaculated the first; "and he gets fifteen dollars

for doin' the likes of that? You and me has missed our vocation, Bill."

I could have knocked down the impertinent fellows, but, after all, what right had I to do it? It was all true. "Noblesse oblige," I muttered through my clinched teeth; and catching Mrs. Slater's stern glance, I went to do my duty by taking my partner to supper.

At the close of the evening Mr. Slater came up to me. He was certainly a dignified-looking old fellow, but he seemed unhappy. "Well, Mr. Valentine," he said, with rather a melancholy smile, "you have done remarkably well. Been quite the life of the evening. Trying thing to entertain a party of this size. This is the first time we have done it. How do you think it went off? Your candid opinion now."

"Remarkably well," I said.

I noticed that his manner to me was secret and confidential, as if we had entered into some dark partnership of crime.

"Mrs. Slater," he continued, "is an ambitious woman, and it was her idea having you. She wanted a different style of young man from those we have been accustomed to, and"--looking at me with a sad pride--"she got it--she got it."

As I looked at him his face seemed to grow more familiar. At this moment Miss Raggles, who had gone up-stairs to get her cloak, made her appearance. I bade a hurried good-night to Mr. and Mrs. Slater, and accompanied the young lady home. She lived in that part of Fifth Avenue which is on the confines of both New York and Harlem. She treated me as a distinguished stranger, and ended by inviting me to call. Unsuspecting Miss Raggles! Her mother had apparently gone home hours before. In the Slater set they managed things in this way.

I wonder when I am to be paid.

January 22d.--I have discovered where I have seen Mr. Slater before. I stopped at Stewart's yesterday to buy some gloves (I was paid the morning after the Slater party), and as I walked down the shop one of the individuals popularly known as "walkers" approached me.

"What do you desire, sir?" I heard a pompous voice say. "Where may I direct you?"

"Gloves," I said, mechanically.

"Third section on the right hand, Fourth Avenue side, sir."

I looked at my guide, as a familiar tone struck my ear. It was Mr. Slater. At the same instant he recognized me. A moment before we had been independent human beings--at the next our consciousness of the mutual knowledge we possessed of each other destroyed our comfort. Mr. Slater walked away in one direction and I in another. Still, it was a comfort to know where I had seen him before.

January 27th.--I find that a whole week has elapsed since I have written anything in my journal. The truth is, I have been too miserable. This occupation is degrading. Everywhere I go some fresh humiliation awaits me. The very servants look on me with suspicion. At one place the butler followed me around all the evening as if I were a thief. I don't think any one noticed it, yet I could not rid myself of the feeling that Morton, who happened to be there, looked at me suspiciously once or twice. Suppose he were to discover everything, and tell it at the club! It is too hideous to be thought of.

At another house, where I had been obliged to sing comic songs and make a buffoon of myself for two hours, my host--an enormously rich and illiterate person--presented me with a check for twenty-five dollars as I left the house. I returned it indignantly, but he pressed it into my hand, saying, heartily:

"I ain't goin' to take it back, so you may as well keep it. You done first-rate this evening--first-rate! 'Tain't charity, but because what you done is worth more than fifteen dollars by a long shot; and when I have pleasure, I expect to pay for it, like I do for everything else."

To avoid a scene, I had to keep the money. I am certainly richer than I was. I have been able, by my honest exertions, to supply myself with the luxuries without which I cannot exist; and when my present income

is doubled, I shall be able to pay something on account for my board bill here, and settle some of my other bills. The question that now troubles me is, Are they _honest_ exertions?

Since the evening at Mr. Griddle's (the rich manufacturer who gave me the check) I have been to several places, at all of which, among others that I knew, I saw Morton. His manner is becoming most unpleasant. He said to me the other night, with that satirical grin of his:

"You're getting to be quite a society man, Valentine. Never used to see you about so much. It's always been my way, but it's something new for you."

I felt sure he suspected something. Another time he said:

"By the way, I thought you were going out of town to live? As you seem to have changed your mind, I suppose it is all right about the Amsterdam?"

I would not dare to join a club now. I stammered out something about talking it over another time, and left the room. I begin to hate him. He suspects the truth, and knows that I am in his power, and enjoys it.

February 4th.--Added to the mortifications I am exposed to, the feeling that I am a sham grows on me. I impose on every one wherever I go. This thought has robbed me of my peace of mind. However poor I was before, I had nothing to be ashamed of. Now I am a man with a _Secret_.

February 5th.--I have realized this too late. Last night I was sent for to fill a place at a dinner-table where fourteen had been expected, and at the last minute one had failed. Mr. Courtland, the gentleman at whose house the dinner was given, treated me politely before his guests, yet with him I felt all the odium of my position. I was there as a convenience, and nothing else. My relation to him was purely a business one. The house was on Washington Square, and was old-fashioned but magnificent. The dining-room was hung with tapestry, and we sat around the dinner-table in carved arm-chairs. I made a

pretence of talking to the old lady whom I took in to dinner, and whom I had met before, but in reality my attention was absorbed by a beautiful young girl who sat opposite to me. She had dark hair, brilliant coloring, and deep-set brown eyes. She wore an oddly old-fashioned gown of yellow satin, cut square in the neck. I found that she was Mr. Courtland's niece and heiress, and lived with him. He was a widower without any children. After dinner, when the men went into the drawing-room, I determined to leave. Mr. Courtland's manner was too much for my self-respect. Miss Courtland stood by the piano, and every one was begging her to sing.

"My music has gone to be bound," she said, "and I cannot sing without it."

Her uncle would not accept this refusal, and produced a portfolio of old music. His niece selected a duet for soprano and tenor, and said that she would sing if any one would take the tenor; she stood with the music in her hand, looking dubiously at the circle of men around her. Not one could sing. Mrs. Delancey, my companion at the dinner-table, looked at me.

"Mr. Valentine sings, Helen. I am sure he will be happy to sing with you."

Miss Courtland turned to me with a smile that was positively bewildering. "Will you sing this duet with me, Mr. Valentine?"

Mr. Courtland flashed a furious glance at me, which said, "Don't dare to sing with my niece." Of all my humiliations this stung me the most. Mr. Courtland, however, seemed to regret having shown so much feeling, for his manner changed.

"I hope you will oblige us by singing, Mr. Valentine," he said, stiffly.

Of course I sang, although I was tempted to refuse, and leave the house instead. How could I refuse Miss Courtland? Her voice was exquisite--sympathetic. It made me feel as though I could confide in her. What if I should! Yes, and be cut the next time we met. I felt painfully the chasm that divided us, gentle and cordial as she was,

and left as soon as the song was over. I wonder whether I shall see her again?

February 13th.--I have been out several times this week, and twice have met Miss Courtland. Her uncle never goes out, and Mrs. Delancey chaperons her. She always seems glad to see me, and certainly has the most charming manners. Never mind the fact of my being a whited sepulchre. Let me enjoy the goods the gods have sent me. That confounded Morton! he is always at Miss Courtland's elbow, and when he succeeds in engaging her to dance before I do, he looks at me with his insolent smile.

February 15th.--Morton's malice is unspeakable. Feeling convinced as I do that he suspects my secret, it is positive torture to see him talk to Miss Courtland as he did last night. He evidently spoke of me, and she listened to him, looking at me meanwhile with a surprised expression. That man has me in his power.

February 20th.--I feel that it is unprincipled to send Miss Courtland flowers, for two reasons--first, because I cannot do it and pay my bills as well; secondly, because it adds to my deception in making a friend of her, and yet I cannot resist the temptation to show her my admiration.

February 21st.--Matters are coming to a climax. Last night Miss Courtland said, with a dignified sweetness that was irresistible: "Mr. Valentine, I have noticed that you have never been to see me. I have not asked you, because I supposed you would feel at liberty to come after having dined with my uncle."

"I assure you, Miss Courtland," I said, "I should of course have done so, but the truth is I have had a slight misunderstanding with your uncle, and I do not feel that I can go to his house."

Of course I added a lie to the rest of my duplicity. Her face was lighted with a charming smile. "That is no reason for not coming; you owe my uncle a call at all events. I will be at home to-morrow--no, Thursday afternoon. Come in about five o'clock, and I will give you a cup of tea. My uncle is never at home until six o'clock, and when he does come in, never sees visitors. Even if you do meet him, it will be

a good opportunity to make your peace with him."

In a kind of dream I recklessly consented.

Morton came pushing up at that moment.

"By the way, Miss Courtland," he said, "will you be at home Thursday afternoon? If so, with your permission, I will call upon you."

Of course he had overheard me, and wished to irritate me. Fortunately some one spoke to Miss Courtland at that moment, and she turned away without having heard Morton. For once my anger flamed out. I caught him by the arm, and held it like a vise.

"Be careful," I said, between my teeth. "This sort of thing may go too far."

He gave me a furious look, and shaking me off, left the room.

February 22d. TWO A.M.--My brain is reeling. My world is upside down. There is no use in trying to sleep. I will write down what has happened. It may calm me. This evening when I entered the house where I was to entertain others at the expense of my self-respect, I found I was before the time. The rooms were empty, with the exception of my hostess, a very old lady, who held a formidable ear-trumpet in her hand. Preceding me down the brightly lighted room was a gentleman. There was something unpleasantly familiar in the cut of his coat and the carriage of his head. It was my evil genius, Morton. I made up my mind to wait until some one else came, before going in. As I stood in the background this scene was enacted before me:

Morton bowed. The old lady looked blankly at him.

"I am Mr. Morton, madam," said he.

She continued to stare at him, and then held out her trumpet. Morton took it, and repeated his words into its depths.

"Horton?" she said, interrogatively.

"Morton," he called.

"Oh yes, Lawton--Mr. Lawton."

"Morton!" he fairly shouted.

"Oh yes," she said, intelligence breaking over her face. "Morton--Mr. Morton, from the Globe office. Where's the other? There were to have been two. Just take care of yourself, please, for a moment. I have to go and see about something."

She tottered out of the room, and Morton, turning, confronted me. He saw that I had overheard all. Before I could speak he came toward me with an air of desperation.

"For Heaven's sake don't betray me, Valentine, now that you know my secret," he exclaimed. "I have felt from the first that you suspected--that I was in your power. I throw myself on your mercy. In your safe and prosperous condition you don't know--you can't know--what a frightful position I am in."

My face must have changed in some ghastly manner as he spoke, for he stopped and looked at me with deepening consternation.

"What is it? What's the matter?" he asked.

I saw my mistake, and tried to look unconcerned, but at that moment the old lady came back into the room.

"Oh, there's the other," she said, as she saw me. "His name's Valentine, so that's all right."

Several people came into the room, and she went forward to greet them. Morton looked at me in dazed silence for a minute; then he seemed to master his astonishment by a mighty effort.

"So," he said, huskily, "we are quits. I am in your power, but you are equally in mine. Be careful how you interfere with me."

We did not speak again together during the evening. What is to be the

end of this? To-morrow I go to see Miss Courtland, and I have made up my mind to confess everything. Perhaps she will think no worse of me. The queen still loved Ruy Blas after she found he was a lackey.

What nonsense am I dreaming of?

February 23d.--The game is up. I went this afternoon to Mr. Courtland's house, and found Miss Courtland at home, alone. She was in a dim little room, with the firelight nickering on her beautiful face. She saw that I was constrained and anxious, and at once asked me the reason. Something in her kind manner broke down my composure.

"Miss Courtland," I said, "how would you feel if I were to confess that I have been deceiving you--that I am not what I seem to be?"

"What do you mean?" she asked, anxiously.

"Tell me first," I said, "that whatever I tell you, you will still be my friend, and will believe me when I say that I have not wished to deceive you--that I have bitterly regretted it."

She looked at me with a frank smile. "You may depend upon me."

In a few words I told her everything from the time of my going to the Globe office up to that moment. She listened gravely; then she turned to me again with a smile.

"You have told me nothing dishonorable (although you can surely find something better to do), and I will still be your friend. I am glad you told me, for Mr. Morton said some things about you last night that made me fear--"

This was too hard, and I interrupted her.

"Morton!" I said. "Morton is the last person to dare to say anything against me."

Here I checked myself, but Miss Courtland's curiosity was aroused.

"What do you mean?" she asked.

"Nothing," I said. "I will not talk of Morton; it is enough that you are still my friend."

"Certainly I am," she said.

She held out her hand as she spoke, and I took it and raised it to my lips. At the same moment two people entered the room by different doors. One was Mr. Courtland; the other, Morton. Mr. Courtland seemed stupefied with astonishment, for he stood motionless, but Morton strode toward me.

"How dare you!" he gasped. "I will expose you."

His audacity was too much for my self-control.

"Morton," I said, in a low tone, "as your position is the same as mine, I warn you to be careful of what you say."

I spoke louder than I intended, and Miss Courtland heard my words. She gave Morton a keen look.

"Ah! now I understand!" she exclaimed, as if involuntarily.

As she said this Morton became very white, and muttering something about a broken engagement, with a hasty good-by to Mr. Courtland, left the room. He had gone a step too far at last. Mr. Courtland had by this time recovered from his astonishment.

"What do you mean by this astounding impertinence!" he exclaimed, coming toward me. He turned to his niece: "Helen, do you know on what terms this man first came here? I hired him--hired him from the Globe Employment Bureau to fill an empty place at my dinner-table. I did not warn you against him, for I thought you would not meet him again. I trusted also to his sense of decency, but I was mistaken. Your honesty was guaranteed, sir. You have not taken my silver, but you have done worse. This shall be reported to the Globe Employment Bureau immediately. First, leave this house. I shall go at once to the Globe office."

He paused for an instant.

"My dear uncle," said Miss Courtland, quietly, "Mr. Valentine has just told me all this himself. He only came here because I asked him to come."

Mr. Courtland would not listen to any explanations, but only repeated his assertion that he would report me at the Globe office. There was nothing for me to do but to go.

I gave Miss Courtland one look of gratitude, then I left the house. I have but two consolations: one, that Miss Courtland still trusts me; the other, that Morton is as badly off as I am--rather worse.

My dismissal from the Globe has just come. It is a relief to be free from this bondage, but I am as much in debt as usual, and what am I to do in the future?

February 24th.--A light is beginning to break on my dark horizon. I have just received a note from Miss Courtland telling me that her uncle has been pacified by her explanations; that as I am no longer in the employ of the Globe, I am at liberty to come to his house; and that she is sure I will find something better to do in the future.

I can't help thinking of Ruy Blas and the queen again. I feel like Ruy Blas come back to life, and _my_ queen is not married.

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BY BAYNARD RUST HALL

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The camp was furnished with several stands for preaching, exhorting, jumping and jerking; but still one place was the pulpit, above all others. This was a large scaffold, secured between two noble sugar trees, and railed in to prevent from falling over in a swoon, or springing over in an ecstasy; its cover the dense foliage of the trees, whose trunks formed the graceful and massive columns. Here was said to be also the _altar_, but I could not see its _horns_ or any _sacrifice_; and the pen, which I _did_ see--a place full of clean straw, where were put into fold stray sheep willing to return. It was at this pulpit, with its altar and pen, the regular preaching was done; around here the congregation assembled; hence orders were issued; here, happened the hardest fights, and were gained the greatest victories, being the spot where it was understood Satan fought in person; and here could be seen gestures the most frantic, and heard noises the most unimaginable, and often the most appalling. It was the place, in short, where most crowded either with praiseworthy intentions of getting some religion, or with unholy purposes of being amused; we, of course, designing neither one nor the other, but only to see philosophically and make up an opinion. At every grand outcry a simultaneous rush would, however, take place from all parts of the camp, proper and improper, towards the pulpit, altar, and pen; till the crowding, by increasing the suffocation and the fainting, would increase the tumult and the uproar; but this, in the estimation of many devotees, only rendered the meeting more lively and interesting.

By considering what was done at this central station one may approximate the amount of spiritual labor done in a day, and then a week in the whole camp:

1. About day-break on Sabbath a horn _blasted_ us up for public prayer and exhortation, the exercises continuing nearly two hours.

2. Before breakfast, another blast for family and private prayer; and then every tent became, in camp language, "a bethel of struggling Jacobs and prevailing Israels," every tree "an altar;" and every grove "a

secret closet;" till the air all became religious words and phrases, and vocal with "Amens."

3. After a proper interval came a horn for the forenoon service; then was delivered the sermon, and that followed by an appendix of some half dozen exhortations let off right and left, and even behind the pulpit, that all might have a portion in due season.

4. We had private and secret prayer again before dinner;--some clambering into thick trees to be hid, but forgetting in their simplicity, that they were heard and betrayed. But religious devotion excuses all errors and mistakes.

5. The afternoon sermon with its bob-tail string of exhortations.

6. Private and family prayer about tea time.

7. But lastly, we had what was termed "a precious season," in the third regular service at the principia of the camp. This season began not long after tea and was kept up long after I left the ground; which was about midnight. And now sermon after sermon and exhortation after exhortation followed like shallow, foaming, roaring waters; till the speakers were exhausted and the assembly became an uneasy and billowy mass, now hushing to a sobbing quiescence, and now rousing by the groans of sinners and the triumphant cries of folks that had "jist got religion"; and then again subsiding to a buzzy state, occasioned by the whimpering and whining voices of persons giving spiritual advice and comfort! How like a volcanic crater after the evomition of its lava in a fit of burning cholic, and striving to resettle its angry and tumultuating stomach!

It is time, however, to speak of the three grand services and their concomitants, and to introduce several master spirits of the camp.

Our first character, is the Reverend Elder Sprightly. This gentleman was of good natural parts; and in a better school of intellectual discipline and more fortunate circumstances, he must have become a worthy minister of some more tasteful, literary and evangelical sect. As it was, he had only become what he never got beyond--"a very smart man;" and his aim had become one--to enlarge his own people. And in this work, so great

was his success, that, to use his own modest boastfulness in his sermon to-day,--"although folks said when he came to the Purchase that a single corn-crib would hold his people, yet, bless the Lord, they had kept spreading and spreading till all the corn-cribs in Egypt weren't big enough to hold them!"

He was very happy at repartee, as Robert Dale Owen well knows; and not "slow" (inexpert) in the arts of "taking off"--and--"giving them their own." This trait we shall illustrate by an instance.

Mr. Sprightly was, by accident, once present where a Campbellite Baptist, that had recently taken out a right for administering six doses of lobelia, red pepper and steam to men's bodies, and a plunge into cold water for the good of their souls, was holding forth against all Doctors, secular and sacred, and very fiercely against Sprightly's brotherhood. Doctor Lobelia's text was found somewhere in Pope Campbell's _New_ Testament; as it suited the following discourse introduced with the usual inspired preface:

DOCTOR LOBELIA'S SERMON

"Well, I never rub'd my back agin a collige, nor git no sheepskin, and allow the Apostuls didn't nither. Did anybody ever hear of Peter and Poll a'goin' to them new-fangled places and gitten skins to preach by? No, sirs, I allow not; no, sirs, we don't pretend to loguk--this here _new_ testament's sheepskin enough for me. And don't Prisbeteruns and tother baby sprinklurs have reskorse to loguk and skins to show how them what's emerz'd didn't go down into the water and come up agin? And as to Sprightly's preachurs, don't they dress like big-bugs, and go ridin about the Purchis on hunder-dollur hossis, a-spunginin on poor priest-riden folks and a-eatin fried chicken fixins so powerful fast that chickens has got skerse in these diggins; and then what ain't fried makes tracks and hides when they sees them a-comin?

"But, dear bruthrun, we don't want store cloth and yaller buttins, and fat hossis and chicken fixins, and the like doins--no, sirs! we only wants your souls--we only wants beleevur's baptism--we wants prim--prim--yes, Apostul's Christianity, the Christianity of Christ and them times, when Christians _was_ Christians, and tuk up thare cross and went down into the water, and was buried in the gineine sort of baptism

by emerzhin. That's all we wants; and I hope all's convinced that's the true way--and so let all come right out from among them and git beleeuvur's baptism; and so now if any brothur wants to say a word I'm done, and I'll make way for him to preach."

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Anticipating this common invitation, our friend Sprightly, indignant at this unprovoked attack of Doctor Lobelia, had, in order to disguise himself, exchanged his clerical garb for a friend's blue coatee bedizzened with metal buttons; and also had erected a very tasteful and sharp coxcomb on his head, out of hair usually reposing sleek and quiet in the most saint-like decorum; and then, at the bid from the pulpit-stump, out stepped Mr. Sprightly from the opposite spice-wood grove, and advanced with a step so smirky and dandyish as to create universal amazement and whispered demands--"Why! who's that?" And some

of his very people, who were present, as they told me, did not know their preacher till his clear, sharp voice came upon the hearing, when they showed, by the sudden lifting of hands and eyebrows, how near they were to exclaiming: "Well! I never!"

Stepping on to the consecrated stump, our friend, without either preliminary hymn or prayer, commenced thus:

"My friends, I only intend to say a few words in answer to the pious brother that's just sat down, and shall not detain but a few minutes. The pious brother took a good deal of time to tell what we soon found out ourselves--that he never went to college and don't understand logic. He boasts, too, of having no sheepskin to preach by; but I allow any sensible buck-sheep would have died powerful sorry, if he'd ever thought his hide would come to be handled by some preachers. The skin of the knowingest old buck couldn't do some folks any good--some things salt won't save.

"I rather allow Johnny Calvin's boys and 'tother baby sprinklers,' ain't likely to have they idees physicked out of them by steam logic, and doses of No. 6. They can't be steamed up so high as to want cooling by a cold water plunge. But I want to say a word about Sprightly's preachers, because I have some slight acquaintance with that there

gentleman, and don't choose to have them all run down for nothing.

"The pious brother brings several grave charges; first, they ride good horses. Now don't every man, woman and child in the Purchase know that Sprightly and his preachers have hardly any home, and that they live on horseback? The money most folks spend in land these men spend for a good horse; and don't they need a good horse to stand mud and swim floods? And is it any sin for a horse to be kept fat that does so much work? The book says 'a merciful man is merciful to his beast,' and that we mustn't 'muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn.' Step round that fence corner, and take a peep, dear friends, at a horse hung on the stake; what's he like? A wooden frame with a dry hide stretched over it. What's he live on? Ay! that's the pint! Well, what's them buzzards after?--look at them sailing up there. Now who owns that live carrion?--the pious brother that's just preached to us just now. And I want to know if it wouldn't be better for him to give that dumb brute something to cover his bones, before he talks against 'hunder-dollar hossis' and the like?

"The next charge is, wearing good clothes. Friends, don't all folks when they come to meeting put on their best clothes? and wouldn't it be wrong if preachers came in old torn coats and dirty shirts? It wouldn't do no how. Well, Sprightly and his preachers preach near about every day; and oughtn't they always to look decent? Take, then, a peep at the pious brother that makes this charge; his coat is out at the elbow, and has only three or four buttons left, and his arm, where he wipes his nose and mouth, is shiny as a looking glass--his trousers are crawling up to show he's got no stockings on; and his face has got a crop of beard two weeks old and couldn't be cleaned by 'baby sprinklin'; yes, look at them there matters, and say if Sprightly's preachers ain't more like the apostles in decency than the pious brother is.

"A word now about chicken-fixins and doins. And I say it would be a charity to give the pious brother sich a feed now and then, for he looks half-starved, and savage as a meat-ax; and I advise that old hen out there clucking up her brood not to come this way just now, if she don't want all to disappear. But I say that Sprightly's preachers are so much beliked in the Purchase, that folks are always glad to see them, and make a pint of giving them the best out of love; an' that's more than can be said for some folks here.

"The pious brother says he only wants our souls--then what makes him peddle about Thomsonian physic? Why don't he and Campbell make steam and

No. 6 as free as preaching? I read of a quack doctor once, who used to give his advice free gratis for nothing to any one what would _buy_ a box of his pills--but as I see the pious brother is crawling round the fence to his anatomical horse and physical saddle-bags, I have nothing to say, and so, dear friends, I bid you all good-by."

Such was Rev. Elder Sprightly, who preached to us on Sabbath morning at the Camp. Hence, it is not remarkable that in common with many worthy persons, he should think his talents properly employed in using up "Johnny Calvin and his boys," especially as no subject is better for popularity at a camp-meeting. He gave us, accordingly, first, that affecting story of Calvin and Servetus, in which the latter figured to-day like a Christian Confessor and martyr, and the former as a diabolical persecutor; many moving incidents being introduced not found in history, and many ingenious inferences and suppositions tending to blacken the Reformer's character. Judging from the frequency of the deep groans, loud amens, and noisy hallelujahs of the congregation during the narrative, had Calvin suddenly thrust in among us his hatchet face and goat's beard, he would have been hissed and pelted, nay possibly been lynched and soused in the branch; while the excellent Servetus would have been _toted_ on our shoulders, and feasted in the tents on fried ham, cold chicken fixins and horse sorrel pies!

Here is a specimen of Mr. S.'s mode of exciting triumphant exclamation, amens, groans, etc., against Calvin and his followers: "Dear sisters, don't you love the tender little darling babes that hang on your parental bosoms? (amen!)--Yes! I know you do--(amen! amen!)--Yes, I know, I know it.--(Amen, amen! hallelujah!) Now don't it make your parental hearts throb with anguish to think those dear infantile darlings might some day be out burning brush and fall into the flames and be burned to death! (deep groans.)--Yes, it does, it does! But oh! sisters, oh! mothers! how can you think your babes mightn't get religion and die and be burned for ever and ever? (O! forbid--amen--groans.) But, oho! only think--only think, oh! would you ever a had them darling infantile sucklings born, if you had a known they were to be burned in a brush heap! (No, no!--groans--shrieks.) What! what! _what!_ if you had _foreknown_ they must have gone to hell?--(hoho! hoho--amen!) And does

anybody think He is such a tyrant as to make spotless, innocent babies just to damn them? (No! in a voice of thunder.)--No! sisters! no! no! mothers! No! _no!_ sinners, _no!!_--He ain't such a tyrant! Let John Calvin burn, torture and roast, but He never foreordained babies, as Calvin says, to damnation! (damnation!--echoed by hundreds.)--Hallelujah! 'tis a free salvation! Glory! a free salvation!--(Here Mr. S. battered the rail of the pulpit with his fists, and kicked the bottom with his feet--many screamed--some cried amen!--others groaned and hissed--and more than a dozen females of two opposite colors arose and clapped their hands as if engaged in starching, etc., etc.) No-h-o! _'tis_ a free, a free, a _free_ salvation!--away with Calvin! 'tis for all! _all!_ ALL! Yes! shout it out! clap on! rejoice! rejoice! oho-oho! sinners, sinners, sinners, oh-ho-oho!" etc., etc.

Here was maintained for some minutes the most edifying uproar of shouting, bellowing, crying, clapping and stamping, mingled with hysterical laughing, termed out there "holy laughing," and even dancing! and barking! called also "holy!"--till, at the partial subsidence of the bedlam, the orator resumed his eloquence.

It is singular Mr. S. overlooked an objection to the divine Providence arising from his own illustration. That children do sometimes perish by being burnt and drowned, is undeniable; yet is not their existence prevented--and that in the very case where the sisters were induced to say _they_ would have prevented their existence! But, in justice to Mr. S., we must say that he seemed to have anticipated the objection, and to have furnished the reply; for, said he, in one part of his discourse, "God did not _wish_ to foreknow _some_ things!"

But our friend's mode of avoiding a predestined death--if such an absurdity be supposed--deserves all praise for the facility and simplicity of the contrivance. "Let us," said he, "for argument's sake, grant that I, the Rev. Elder Sprightly, am foreordained to be drowned, in the river, at Smith's Ferry, next Thursday morning, at twenty-two minutes after ten o'clock; and suppose I know it; and suppose I am a free, moral, voluntary, accountable agent, as Calvinists say--do you think I'm going to be drowned? No!--I would stay at home all day; and you'll never ketch the Rev. Elder Sprightly at Smith's Ferry--nor near the river neither!"

Reader, is it any wonder Calvinism is on the decline? Logic it can stand; but human nature thus excited in opposition, it can not stand. Hence, throughout our vast assembly to-day, this unpopular ism, in spite of Calvin and the Epistle to the Romans, was put down; if not by acclamation, yet by exclamation--by shouting--by roaring--by groaning and hissing--by clapping and stamping--by laughing, and crying, and whining; and thus the end of the sermon was gained and the preacher glorified!

The introductory discourse in the afternoon was by the Rev. Remarkable Novus. This was a gentleman I had often the pleasure of entertaining at my house in Woodville; and he was a Christian in sentiment and feeling; for though properly and decidedly a warm friend to his own sect, he was charitably disposed toward myself and others that differed from him ecclesiastically. His talents were moderate; but his voice was transcendently excellent. It was rich, deep, mellow, liquid and sonorous, and capable of any inflections. It could preserve its melody in an unruffled flow, at a pitch far beyond the highest point reached by the best-cultivated voice. His fancy naturally capricious, was indulged without restraint; yet not being a learned or well-read man, he mistook words for ideas, and hence employed without stint all the terms in his vocabulary for the commonest thoughts. He believed, too, like most of his brotherhood, that excitement and agitation were necessary to conversion and of the essence of religion; and this, with a proneness to delight in the music and witchery of his own wonderful voice, made Mr. Novus an eccentric preacher, and induced him often to excel at camp-meetings, the very extravaganzas of his clerical brethren, whom more than once he has ridiculed and condemned at my fireside.

The camp-meeting was, in fact, too great a temptation for my friend's temperament, and the very theater for the full display of his magnificent voice; and naturally, this afternoon, off he set at a tangent, interrupting the current of his sermon by extemporaneous bursts of warning, entreaty and exhortation. Here is something like his discourse--yet done by me in a subdued tone--as, I repeat, are most extravaganzas of the ecclesiastical and spiritual sort, not only here, but in all other parts of the work.

"My text, dear hearers," said he, "on this auspicious, and solemn, and

heaven-ordered occasion, is that exhortation of the inspired apostle,
'Walk worthy of your vocation.'

"And what, my dear brethren, what do you imagine and conjecture our holy penman meant by 'walking?' Think ye he meant a physical walking, and a moving, and a going backward and forward thus? (represented by Mr. N.'s proceeding, or rather marching, *à la militaire*, several times from end to end of the staging). No, sirs!--it was not a literal walking and locomotion, a moving and agitating of the natural legs and limbs. No, sirs!--no!--but it was a moral, a spiritual, a religious, ay! yes! a philosophical and metaphorically figurative walking, our holy apostle meant!

"Philosophic, did I say? Yes: philosophic *did* I say. For religion is the most philosophical thing in the universe--ay! throughout the whole expansive infinitude of the divine empire. Tell me, deluded infidels and mistaken unbelievers! tell me, ain't philosophy what's according to the consistency of nature's regular laws? and what's more onsentaneous and homogeneous to man's sublimated moral nature, than religion? Yes! tell me! Yes! yes! I am for a philosophical religion, and a philosophical religion is for *me*--ay! we are mutually made and formed for this beautiful reciprocity!

"And yet some say we make too much noise--even some of our respected Woodville merchants--(meaning the author). But what's worth making a noise about in the dark mundane of our terrestrial sphere, if religion ain't? People always, and everywhere in all places, make most noise about what they opine to be most precious. See! yon banner streaming with golden stars and glorious stripes over congregated troops, on the Fourth of July, that ever-memorable--that never-to-be-*forgotten* day, which celebrates the grand annual anniversary of our nation's liberty and independence! when our forefathers and ancestors burst asunder and tore forever off the iron chains of political thraldom! and rose in plenitude, ay! in the magnificence of their grandeur, and crushed their oppressors!--yes! and hurled down dark despotism from the lofty pinnacle of its summit altitude, where she was seated on her liberty-crushing throne, and hurled her out of her iron chariot, as her wheels thundered over the prostrate slaves of power!--(Amen)--Yes!--hark!--we make a noise about that! But what's civil liberty to religious liberty, and emancipated disenthraldom from the dark despotism of yonder terrific

prince of darkness! whose broad, black, piniony wings spread wide o'er the ærial concave like a dense cloud upon a murky sky?--(A-a-men!)--And ain't it, ye men of yards and measures, philosophical to make a noise about this?--(Amen!--yes!) Yes! _yes!_ and I ain't ashamed to rejoice and shout aloud. Ay! as long as the prophet was ordered to stamp with his foot, I will stamp with my foot;--(here he stamped till the platform trembled for its safety)--and to smite with his hand, I will _smite_ with my hand--(slapping alternate hands on alternate thighs.)--Yes! and I will shout, too!--and cry aloud, and spare not--glory! for--ever!--(and here his voice rang out like the sweet, clear tones of a bugle).

"And, therefore, my dear sisters and brethren, let us walk worthy of our vocation; not with the natural legs of the physical corporation, but in the apostolical way, with the metaphysical and figurative legs of the mind--(here Mr. N. caught some one smiling).--Take care, sinner, take care! curl not the scornful nose--I'm willing to be a fool for religion's sake--but turn not up the scornful nose--do its ministers no harm! Sinner, mark me!--in yon deep and tangled grove, where tall, aspiring trees wave green and lofty heads in the free air of balmy skies--there sinner, an hour ago, when the sonorous horn called on our embattled hosts to go to private prayer! an hour ago, in yonder grove I knelt and prayed for you!--(hooh!)--yes! I prayed some poor soul might be given for my hire!--and he promised me one!--(Glory! glory!--ah! give him one!)--laughing sinner!--take care!--I'll have you!--(Grant it--amen!--ooohoo!) Look out, I'm going to fire--(assuming the attitude of rifle-shooting)--bang!--may He send that through your heart!--may it pierce clean home through joints and marrow!--and let all people say amen!--(and here amen _was_ said, and not in the tame style of the American Archbishop of Canterbury's cathedral, be assured; but whether the spiritual bullet hit the chap aimed at, I never learned; if it did, his groans were inaudible in the alarming thunder of that amen).

"Ay! ay! that's the way! that's the way! don't be ashamed of your vocation--that's the way to walk and let your light shine! Now, some wise folks despise light, and call for miracles: but when we can't have one kind of light, let us be philosophical, and take another. For my part, when I'm bogging about these dark woods, far away in the silent, somber shadows, I rejoice in sunshine; and would prefer it of choice, rather than all other celestial and translucent luminaries: but when the

gentle fanning zephyrs of the shadowy night breathe soft among the trembling leaves and sprays of the darkening forests, then I rejoice in moonshine: and when the moonshine dims and pales away, with the waning silvery queen of heaven in her azure zone, I look up to the blue concave of the circular vault, and rejoice in starlight. No! _no!_ NO! any light!--give us any light rather than _none_!--(Ah, do, good--!) Yes! yes! we are the light of the world, and so let us let our light shine, whether sunshine, or moonshine, or starlight!--(oohoo!--)and then the poor benighted sinner, bogging about this terraqueous, but dark and mundane sphere, will have a light like a pole star of the distant north, to point and guide him to the sunlit climes of yonder world of bright and blazing bliss!"--(A-a-amen!)

Such is part of the sermon. His concluding prayer ended thus--(Divine names omitted).

"Oh, come down! come, come down! _down!_ now!--to-night!--do wonders then! come down in _might!_ come down in _power!_ let salvation _roll!_ _Come_ down! _come!_ and let the earthquaking mighty noise of thy thundering chariot wheels be heard, and felt, and seen, and experienced in the warring elements of our spiritualized hearts!"

During the prayer, many petitions and expressions were so rapturously and decidedly encored, that our friend kindly repeated them; and sometimes, like public singers, with handsome variations; and many petitions by amateur zealots were put forth, without any notice of the current prayer offered by Mr. N., yet evidently having in view some elegance of his sermon. And not a few petitions, I regret to say, seemed to misapprehend the drift and scope of the preacher. One of this sort was the earnest ejaculations of an old and worthy brother, who, in a hollow, sepulchral, and rather growly voice, bellowed out in a very beautiful part of the grand prayer: "Oohhoo! take away _moonshine_!"

But our first performance was to be at night: and at the first _toot_ of the tin horn we assembled in expectation of a "good time." For, 1. All day preparation had been making for the night; and the actors seemed evidently in restraint, as in mere rehearsal: 2. The night better suits displays and scenes of any kind: but 3. The African was to preach; and rumor had said, "he was a most powerful big preacher, that could stir up folks mighty quick, and use up the ole feller in less than no time."

After prefatory prayers and hymns, and _pithy_ exhortations by several brothers of the Circassian breed, our dusky divine, the Rev. Mizraim Ham, commenced his sermon, founded on the duel between David and Goliath.

This discourse we shall condense into a few pages; although the comedy or _mellow_-drama--for it greatly mellowed and relaxed the muscles--required for its entire action a full hour. There was, indeed, a prologue, but the rest was mainly dialogue, in which Mr. Ham wonderfully personated all the different speakers, varying his tone, manner, attitude, etc., as varying characters and circumstances demanded. We fear much of the spirit has evaporated in this condensation; but that evil is unavoidable.

REV. MIZRAIM HAM'S DISCOURSE

"Bruthurn and sisturn, tention, if you pleases, while I want you for to understand this here battul most partiklur 'zact, or may be you moughtn't comprend urn. Furst place, I gwyin to undevur to sarcumscribe fust the 'cashin of this here battul: second place, the 'comdashins of the armies: third place, the folkses as was gwyin for to fite and didn't want to, and some did: and last and fourth place, I'm gwyin for to show purtiklur 'zact them as fit juul, and git victry and git kill'd.

"Tention, if you please, while I fustly sarcumscribe the 'casion of this here battul. Bruthurn and sisturn, you see them thar hethun Fillystines, what warn't circumcised, they wants to ketch King Sol and his 'ar folks for to make um slave; and so, they cums down to pick a quorl, and begins a-totin off all their cawn, and wouldn't 'low um to make no hoes to hoe um, nor no homnee. And that 'ar, you see, stick in King Solsis gizurd; and he ups and says, says he, 'I'm not gwyin to be used up that 'ar away by them uncircumcis'd hethun Fillystines, and let um tote off our folkses cawn to chuck to thar hogs, and take away our hoes so we can't hoe um--and so, Jonathun, we'll drum up and list soljurs and try um a battul.' And then King Sol and his 'ar folks they goes up, and the hethun and theirn comes down and makes war. And this is the 'cashin why they fit.

"Tention, 'gin, if you pleases, I'm gwyin in the next place secondly, to show the 'comdashins of this here battul, which was so fashin like. The Fillystines they had thar army up thar on a mounting, and King Sol he had hissin over thar, like, across a branch, amoss like that a one thar--(pointing)--and it was chuck full of sling rock all along on the bottom. And so they was both on um camp'd out; this a one on this 'ar side, and tother a one on tother, and the lilly branch tween um--and them's the 'comdashins.

"Tention once more agin, as 'caze next place thirdly, I'm a gwyin to give purtiklur 'zact 'count of sum folkses what fit and sum didn't want to. And lubly sinnahs, maybe you minds um, as how King Sol and his soljurs was pepper hot for fite when he fust liss um; but now, lubly sinnahs, when they gits up to the Fillystines, they cool off mighty quick, I tell you! 'Caze why? I tell you; why, 'caze a grate, big, ugly ole jiunt, with grate big eyes, so fashin--(Mr. Ham made giant's eyes here)--he kums a rampin' out a frount o' them 'ar rigiments, like the ole devul a gwyin about like a half-starv'd lion a-seeking to devour poor lubly sinnahs! And he cum a-jumpin and a-tearin out so fashin--(actions to suit)--to git sum of King Solsis soljurs to fite urn juul; and King Sol, lubly bruthurn and sisturn, he gits sker'd mighty quick, and he says to Jonathun and tother big officers, says he, 'I ain't a gwyin for to fite that grate big fellah.' And arter that they ups and says, 'We ain't a gwyin for to fite um nuther, 'caze he's all kiver'd with sheetirun, and his head's up so high we muss stand a hoss back to reach um!'--the jiunt he was _so big_!!

"And then King Sol he quite down in the jaw, and he turn and ax if somebody wouldn't hunt up a soljur as would fite juul with um; and he'd give um his dawtah, the prinsuss, for wife, and make um king's son-in-law. And then one old koretur, they call him Abnah, he comes up and says to Sol so: 'Please, your majustee, sir, I kin git a young fellah to fite um,' says he. And Abnah tells how Davy had jist rid up in his carruge and left um with the man what tend the hosis--and how he heern Davy a quorl'n with his bruthers and a wantun to fite the jiunt. Then King Sol, he feel mighty glad, I tell you, sinnahs, and he make um bring um up, and King Sol he begins a-talkin so, and Davy he answers so:--

""What's your name, lilly fellah?"

"I was krissen'd Davy.'

"Who's your farder?"

"They call um Jesse.'

"What you follur for livin?"

"I 'tend my farder's sheep.'

"What you kum arter? Ain't you affeerd of that 'ar grate ugly ole jiunt up thar, lilly Davy?"

"I kum to see arter my udder brudurs, and bring um in our carruge some cheese and muttun, and some clene shirt and trowser, and have tother ones wash'd. And when I cum I hear ole Golliawh a hollerin out for somebody to cum and fite juul with um; and all the soljurs round thar they begins for to make traks mighty quick, I tell you, please your majuste, sir, for thar tents; but, says I, what you run for? I'm not a-gwyin for to run away--if King Sol wants somebody for to fite the jiunt, I'll fite um for um.'

"I mighty feer'd, lilly Davy you too leetul for um--'

"No! King Sol, I kin lick um. One day I gits asleep ahind a rock, and out kums a lion and a bawr, and begins a-totin off a lilly lam; and when I heern um roarin and pawin 'bout, I rubs my eyes and sees um gwyin to the mountings--and I arter and ketch'd up and kill um both without no gun nor sword--and I bring back poor lilly lamb. I kin lick ole Goliawh, I tell you, please your majuste, sir.'

"Then King Sol he wery glad, and pat um on the head, and calls um 'lilly Davy,' and wants to put on um his own armur made of brass and sheetirum and to take his sword, but Davy didn't like um, but said he'd trust to his sling. And then out he goes to fite the ole jiunt; and this 'ar brings me to the fourth and last diwishin of our surmun.

"Tention once more agin, for lass time, as I'm gwyin to give most purtikurlust 'zactest 'count of the juul atween lilly Davy and ole

Goliawh the jiunt, to show, lubly sinnah! how the Lord's peepul without no carnul gun nor sword, can fite ole Bellzybub and knock um over with the sling rock of prayer, as lilly Davy knocked over Goliawh with hissin out of the Branch.

"And to 'lusterut the juul and make um spikus, I'll show 'zactly how they talk'd, and jaw'd, and fit it all out; and so ole Goliawh when he sees Davy a kumun, he hollurs out so, and lilly Davy he say back so:

"What you kum for, lilly Jew?--'

"What I kum for? you'll find out mighty quick, I tell you--I kum for fite juul--'

"Huhh! huhh! haw!--t'ink I'm gwyin to fite puttee lilly baby? I want King Sol or Abnah, or a big soljur man--'

"Hole your jaw--I'll make you laugh tother side, ole grizzle-gruzzle, 'rectly--I'm man enough for biggust jiunt Fillystine.'

"Go way, poor lilly boy! go home, lilly baby, to your mudder, and git sugar plum--I no want kill puttee lilly boy--'

"Kum on!--don't be afeerd!--don't go for to run away!--I'll ketch you and lick you--'

"You leetul raskul--I'll kuss you by all our gods--I'll cut out your sassy tung--I'll break your blackguard jaw--I'll rip you up and give um to the dogs and crows--'

"Don't cuss so, ole Golly! I 'sposed you wanted to fite juul--so kum on with your old irun-pot hat on--you'll git belly full mighty quick--'

"You nasty leetle raskul, I'll kum and kill you dead as chopped sassudge."

Here the preacher represented the advance of the parties; and gave a florid and wonderfully effective description of the closing act partly by words and partly by pantomime; exhibiting innumerable marches and counter-marches to get to windward, and all the postures, and gestures,

and defiances, till at last he personated David putting his hand into a bag for a stone; and then making his cotton handkerchief into a sling, he whirled it with fury half a dozen times around his head, and then let fly with much skill at Goliath; and at the same instant halloing with the frenzy of a madman--"Hurraw for lilly Davy!" At that cry he, with his left hand, struck himself a violent slap on the forehead, to represent the blow of the sling-stone hitting the giant; and then in person of Goliath he dropped _quasi_ dead upon the platform amid the deafening plaudits of the congregation; all of whom, some spiritually, some sympathetically, and some carnally, took up the preacher's triumph shout--

"Hurraw! for lilly Davy!"

How the Rev. Mizraim Ham made his exit from the boards I could not see--perhaps he rolled or crawled off. But he did not suffer decapitation, like "ole Golly": since in ten minutes, his woolly pate suddenly popped up among the other sacred heads that were visible over the front railing of the rostrum, as all kept moving to and fro in the wild tossings of religious frenzy.

Scarcely had Mr. Ham fallen at his post, when a venerable old warrior, with matchless intrepidity, stepped into the vacated spot; and without a sign of fear carried on the contest against the Arch Fiend, whose great ally had been so recently overthrown--i.e., Goliath, (not Mr. Ham). Yet excited, as evidently was this veteran, he still could not forego his usual introduction, stating how old he was; where he was born; where he obtained religion; how long he had been a preacher; how many miles he had traveled in a year; and when he buried his wife--all of which edifying truths were received with the usual applauses of a devout and enlightened assembly. But this introduction over--which did not occupy more than fifteen or twenty minutes--he began his attack in fine style, waxing louder and louder as he proceeded, till he exceeded all the old gentlemen to "holler" I ever heard, and indeed old ladies either.

EXTRACT FROM HIS DISCOURSE

"... Yes, sinners! you'll all have to fall and be knock'd down some time or nuther, like the great giant we've heern tell on, when the Lord's

sarvints come and fight agin you! Oho! sinner! sinner!--oh!--I hope you may be knock'd down to-night--now!--this moment--and afore you die and go to judgment! Yes! oho! yes! oh!--I say judgment--for it's appinted once to die and then the judgment--oho! oh! And what a time ther'll be then! You'll see all these here trees--and them 'are stars, and yonder silver moon afire!--and all the alliments a-meltin and runnin down with fervent heat-ah!"--(I have elsewhere stated that the _unlearned_ preachers out there (?) are by the vulgar--(not the _poor_)--but the _vulgar_, supposed to be more favored in preaching than man-made preachers; and that the sign of an unlearned preacher's inspiration being in full _blast_ is his inhalations, which puts an ah! to the end of sentences, members, words, and even exclamations, till his breath is all gone, and no more can be _sucked_ in)--"Oho! hoah! fervent heat-ah! and the trumpit a-soundin-ah!--and the dead arisin-ah!--and all on us a-flyin-ah!--to be judged-ah!--O-hoah! sinner--sinner--sinner--sinner-ah! And what do I see away thar'-ah!--down the Mississippi-ah!--thar's a man jist done a-killin-ah another-ah!--and up he goes with his bloody dagger-ah! And what's that I see to the East-ah! where proud folks live clothed in purple-ah! and fine linen-ah!--I see 'em round a table a drinkin a decoction of Indian herb-ah!--and up they go with cups in thar hands-ah! and see--ohoah!--see! in yonder doggery some a dancin-ah! and fiddlin-ah!--and up they go-ah! with cards-ah! and fiddle-ah!" etc., etc.

Here the tempest around drowned the voice of the old hero; although, from the frantic violence of his gestures, the frightful distortion of his features, and the Pythonic foam of his mouth, he was plainly blazing away at the enemy. The uproar, however, so far subsided as to allow my hearing his closing exhortation, which was this:

"... Yes, I say--fall down--fall down all of you, on your knees!--shout!--cry aloud!--spare not!--stamp with the _foot_!--smite with the _hand_!--down! _down!--that's it--down brethren!--down preachers!--down _sisters_!--pray away!--take it by storm!--_fire_ away! fire _away_! not one at a time! not two together-ah!--a single shot the devil will _dodge-ah_!--give it to him _all at once_--fire a _whole platoon_!--at him!!"

And then such platoon firing as followed! If Satan stood that, he can

stand much more than the worthy folks thought he could. And, indeed, the effect was wonderful!--more than forty thoughtless sinners that came for fun, and twice as many backsliders were instantly knocked over!--and there all lay, some with violent jerkings and writhings of body, and some uttering the most piercing and dismaying shrieks and groans! The fact is, I was nearly knocked down myself--

"You?--Mr. Carlton!!"

Yes--indeed--but not by the hail of spiritual shot falling so thick around me; it was by a sudden rush towards my station, where I stood mounted on a stump. And this rush was occasioned by a wish to see a stout fellow lying on the straw in the pen, a little to my left, groaning and praying, and yet kicking and pummelling away as if scuffling with a sturdy antagonist. Near him were several men and women at prayer, and one or more whispering into his ear; while on a small stump above stood a person superintending the contest, and so as to insure victory to the right party. Now the prostrate man, who like a spirited tom-cat seemed to fight best on his back, was no other than our celebrated New Purchase bully--Rowdy Bill! And this being reported through the congregation, the rush had taken place by which I was so nearly overturned. I contrived, however, to regain my stand, shared indeed now with several others, we hugging one another and standing on tip-toes and our necks elongated as possible; and thus we managed to have a pretty fair view of matters.

About this time the Superintendent in a very loud voice cried out--"Let him alone, brothers! let him alone sisters! keep on praying!--it's a hard fight--the devil's got a tight grip yet! He don't want to lose poor Bill--but he'll let go soon--Bill's gittin the better on him fast!--Pray away!"

Rowdy Bill, be it known, was famous as a gouger, and so expert was he in his antioptical vocation, that in a few moments he usually bored out an antagonist's eyes, or made him cry _peccavi_. Indeed, could he, on the present occasion, have laid hold of his unseen foe's head--spiritually we mean--he would--figuratively, of course--soon have caused him to ease off or let go entirely his metaphorical grip. So, however, thought one friend in the assembly--Bill's wife. For Bill was a man after her own heart; and she often said that "with fair play she sentimentally allowed

her Bill could lick any a man in the 'varsal world, and his weight in wild cats to boot." Hence, the kind-hearted creature, hearing that Bill was actually fighting with the evil one, had pressed in from the outskirts to see fair play; but now hearing Bill was in reality down, and apparently undermost, and above all, the words of the Superintendent, declaring that the fiend had a tight grip of the poor fellow, her excitement would no longer be controlled; and, collecting her vocal energies, she screamed out her common exhortation to Bill, and which, when heeded, had heretofore secured him immediate victories--"Gouge him, Billy!--gouge him, _Billy!--gouge_ him!"

This spirited exclamation was instantly shouted by Bill's cronies and partizans--mischievously, _maybe_, for we have no right to judge of men's motives, in meetings:--but a few--_friends_, doubtless, of the old fellow--cried out in very irreverent tone--"Bite him! devil--_bite_ him!" Upon which the faithful wife, in a tone of voice that beggars description, reiterated her--"Gouge him," etc.--in which she was again joined by her husband's allies, and that to the alarm of his invisible foe; for Bill now rose to his knees, and on uttering some mystic jargon symptomatic of conversion, he was said to have "got religion";--and then all his new friends and spiritual guides united in fresh prayers and shouts of thanksgiving.

It was now very late at night; and joining a few other citizens of Woodville, we were soon in our saddles and buried in the darkness of the forest. For a long time, however, the uproar of the spiritual elements at the camp continued at intervals to swell and diminish on the hearing; and, often came a yell that rose far above the united din of other screams and outcries. Nay, at the distance of nearly two miles, could be distinguished a remarkable and sonorous _oh_!--like the faintly heard explosion of a mighty elocutional class, practising under a master. And yet my comrades, who had heard this peculiar cry more than once, all declared that this wonderful _oh_-ing was performed by the separate voice of our townsman, Eolus Letherlung, Esq.!

CONCLUSION

A camp-meeting of _this sort_ is, all things considered, the very best contrivance for making the largest number of converts in the shortest possible time; and also for enlarging most speedily the bounds of a

Church _Visible_ and _Militant_.

THE HAUNTED MIND.

By Nathaniel Hawthorne

from: *Twice Told Tales*

What a singular moment is the first one, when you have hardly begun to recollect yourself, after starting from midnight slumber! By unclosing your eyes so suddenly you seem to have surprised the personages of your dream in full convocation round your bed, and catch one broad glance at them before they can flit into obscurity. Or, to vary the metaphor, you find yourself for a single instant wide awake in that realm of illusions whither sleep has been the passport, and behold its ghostly inhabitants and wondrous scenery with a perception of their strangeness such as you never attain while the dream is undisturbed. The distant sound of a church-clock is borne faintly on the wind. You question with yourself, half seriously, whether it has stolen to your waking ear from some gray tower that stood within the precincts of your dream. While yet in suspense another clock flings its heavy clang over the slumbering town with so full and distinct a sound, and such a long murmur in the neighboring air, that you are certain it must proceed from the steeple at the nearest corner; You count the strokes—one, two; and there they cease with a booming sound like the gathering of a third stroke within the bell.

If you could choose an hour of wakefulness out of the whole night, it would be this. Since your sober bedtime, at eleven, you have had rest enough to take off the pressure of yesterday's fatigue, while before you, till the sun comes from "Far Cathay" to brighten your window, there is almost the space of a summer night—one hour to be spent in thought with the mind's eye half shut, and two in pleasant dreams, and two in that strangest of enjoyments the forgetfulness alike of joy and woe. The moment of rising belongs to another period of time, and appears so distant that the plunge out of a warm bed into the frosty air cannot yet be anticipated with dismay. Yesterday has already vanished among the shadows of the past; to-morrow has not yet emerged from the future. You have found an intermediate space where the business of life does not intrude, where the passing moment lingers and becomes truly the present; a spot where Father Time, when he thinks nobody is watching him, sits down by the wayside to take breath. Oh that he would fall asleep and let mortals live on without growing older!

Hitherto you have lain perfectly still, because the slightest motion would dissipate the fragments of your slumber. Now, being irrevocably awake, you peep through the half-drawn window-curtain, and observe that the glass is ornamented with fanciful devices in frost-work, and that each pane presents something like a frozen dream. There will be time enough to trace out the analogy while waiting the summons to breakfast. Seen through the clear portion of the glass where the silvery mountain-peaks of the frost-scenery do not ascend, the most conspicuous object is the steeple, the white spire of which directs you to the wintry lustre of the firmament. You may almost distinguish the figures on the clock that has just told the hour. Such a frosty sky and the snow-covered roofs and the long vista of the frozen street, all white, and the distant water hardened into rock, might make you shiver even under four blankets and a woollen comforter. Yet look at that one glorious star! Its beams are distinguishable from all the rest, and actually cast the shadow of the casement on the bed with a radiance of deeper hue than moonlight, though not so accurate an outline.

You sink down and muffle your head in the clothes, shivering all the while, but less from bodily chill than the bare idea of a polar atmosphere. It is too cold even for the thoughts to venture abroad. You speculate on the luxury of wearing out a whole existence in bed like an oyster in its shell, content with the sluggish ecstasy of inaction, and drowsily conscious of nothing but delicious warmth such as you now feel again. Ah! that idea has brought a hideous one in its train. You think how the dead are lying in their cold shrouds and narrow coffins through the drear winter of the grave, and cannot persuade your fancy that they neither shrink nor shiver when the snow is drifting over their little hillocks and the bitter blast howls against the door of the tomb. That gloomy thought will collect a gloomy multitude and throw its complexion over your wakeful hour.

In the depths of every heart there is a tomb and a dungeon, though the lights, the music and revelry, above may cause us to forget their existence and the buried ones or prisoners whom they hide. But sometimes, and oftenest at midnight, those dark receptacles are flung wide open. In an hour like this, when the mind has a passive sensibility, but no active strength—when the imagination is a mirror imparting vividness to all ideas without the power of selecting or controlling them—then pray that your griefs may slumber and the brotherhood of remorse not break their chain. It is too late. A funeral train comes gliding by your bed in which passion and feeling

assume bodily shape and things of the mind become dim spectres to the eye. There is your earliest sorrow, a pale young mourner wearing a sister's likeness to first love, sadly beautiful, with a hallowed sweetness in her melancholy features and grace in the flow of her sable robe. Next appears a shade of ruined loveliness with dust among her golden hair and her bright garments all faded and defaced, stealing from your glance with drooping head, as fearful of reproach: she was your fondest hope, but a delusive one; so call her Disappointment now. A sterner form succeeds, with a brow of wrinkles, a look and gesture of iron authority; there is no name for him unless it be Fatality—an emblem of the evil influence that rules your fortunes, a demon to whom you subjected yourself by some error at the outset of life, and were bound his slave for ever by once obeying him. See those fiendish lineaments graven on the darkness, the writhed lip of scorn, the mockery of that living eye, the pointed finger touching the sore place in your heart! Do you remember any act of enormous folly at which you would blush even in the remotest cavern of the earth? Then recognize your shame.

Pass, wretched band! Well for the wakeful one if, riotously miserable, a fiercer tribe do not surround him—the devils of a guilty heart that holds its hell within itself. What if Remorse should assume the features of an injured friend? What if the fiend should come in woman's garments with a pale beauty amid sin and desolation, and lie down by your side? What if he should stand at your bed's foot in the likeness of a corpse with a bloody stain upon the shroud? Sufficient without such guilt is this nightmare of the soul, this heavy, heavy sinking of the spirits, this wintry gloom about the heart, this indistinct horror of the mind blending itself with the darkness of the chamber.

By a desperate effort you start upright, breaking from a sort of conscious sleep and gazing wildly round the bed, as if the fiends were anywhere but in your haunted mind. At the same moment the slumbering embers on the hearth send forth a gleam which palely illuminates the whole outer room and flickers through the door of the bedchamber, but cannot quite dispel its obscurity. Your eye searches for whatever may remind you of the living world. With eager minuteness you take note of the table near the fireplace, the book with an ivory knife between its leaves, the unfolded letter, the hat and the fallen glove. Soon the flame vanishes, and with it the whole scene is gone, though its image remains an instant in your mind's eye when darkness has swallowed the reality. Throughout the chamber there is the same obscurity as before, but not the same gloom within your breast.

As your head falls back upon the pillow you think—in a whisper be it spoken—how pleasant in these night solitudes would be the rise and fall of a softer breathing than your own, the slight pressure of a tenderer bosom, the quiet throb of a purer heart, imparting its peacefulness to your troubled one, as if the fond sleeper were involving you in her dream. Her influence is over you, though she have no existence but in that momentary image. You sink down in a flowery spot on the borders of sleep and wakefulness, while your thoughts rise before you in pictures, all disconnected, yet all assimilated by a pervading gladness and beauty. The wheeling of gorgeous squadrons that glitter in the sun is succeeded by the merriment of children round the door of a schoolhouse beneath the glimmering shadow of old trees at the corner of a rustic lane. You stand in the sunny rain of a summer shower, and wander among the sunny trees of an autumnal wood, and look upward at the brightest of all rainbows overarching the unbroken sheet of snow on the American side of Niagara. Your mind struggles pleasantly between the dancing radiance round the hearth of a young man and his recent bride and the twittering flight of birds in spring about their new-made nest. You feel the merry bounding of a ship before the breeze, and watch the tuneful feet of rosy girls as they twine their last and merriest dance in a splendid ball-room, and find yourself in the brilliant circle of a crowded theatre as the curtain falls over a light and airy scene.

With an involuntary start you seize hold on consciousness, and prove yourself but half awake by running a doubtful parallel between human life and the hour which has now elapsed. In both you emerge from mystery, pass through a vicissitude that you can but imperfectly control, and are borne onward to another mystery. Now comes the peal of the distant clock with fainter and fainter strokes as you plunge farther into the wilderness of sleep. It is the knell of a temporary death. Your spirit has departed, and strays like a free citizen among the people of a shadowy world, beholding strange sights, yet without wonder or dismay. So calm, perhaps, will be the final change—so undisturbed, as if among familiar things, the entrance of the soul to its eternal home.

DOUBLE TAKE

By Richard Wilson

EBook #30063

Paul Asher, 27, men's furnishings buyer, leaned back and let the cloth band be fastened across his chest, just under his armpits. He adjusted his heavy spectacles, closed his eyes for a moment, breathed deeply, and was off.

The semi-darkness was dispelled as he shot out of a tunnel into dazzling sunlight. The high-powered vehicle he was driving purred smoothly as it took the long, rising curve. The road climbed steadily toward the mountaintop city ahead. He looked around to satisfy himself that he was alone in the car.

He wasn't.

The girl was a pretty one. He'd seen her somewhere before, he thought. She was looking insolently at him, her wide red mouth in a half smile. Her dark hair stirred in the breeze coming through the window, next to her, which was open just a slit.

She said: "Just keep going, Sweetheart, as fast as you can." And she patted the oversized pocketbook that lay in her lap.

He pressed down on the accelerator and the car responded with a flow of power. The countryside fell away from the road on either side. Far below he could see a river, winding broadly to the far-off sea. The summer day sent its heat-shimmers across the miniature landscape.

The road curved again. Theirs was the only car he had seen since he'd come out of the tunnel. But now, far ahead, he saw another. It was standing at the side of the road, next to a gate that came down in the manner of one at a railroad crossing. But he knew by its black and white diagonals and by the little sentry hut half hidden behind the other car that it marked the frontier. A man with a rifle on his shoulder stood

there. They drew up to it fast, but his foot automatically eased up on the floorboard pedal until the girl spoke sharply.

"Right through it, Sweetheart."

In the rear-view mirror he saw her leaning forward, her face tense.

In a moment it would be time to stop, if he were going to.

Paul Asher hesitated a moment. Then he too leaned forward, the band pressing into his chest. He was breathing heavily. There was an almost inaudible click.

He trod on the accelerator. He had a glimpse of the guard unslinging his rifle from his shoulder and of another man running toward the parked car as his vehicle smashed into the flimsy gate and sent it, cracked and splintered, to the side of the road. He fought the slight wrench of the wheel and sped on. He thought he heard a shot.

"Nice work," the girl said. She seemed to be appraising him as she looked at him. "My name, incidentally, is Naomi."

"Hello," he heard himself saying as he whipped the car around a curve that hid the frontier behind a hill. "You seem to know who I am."

"That I do," she said.

"Then why don't you call me by my name, instead of 'Sweetheart'?"

"That's because I like you, Sweetheart." She was looking out the rear window. "Now just step on the gas, because we've got company."

The car that had been parked near the sentry hut was whipping into view around the curve. It was lighter than his, but it was fast, too. He stepped on it.

* * * * *

Now the road had become narrow and twisting. The grade was steep but the surface was good. Abruptly, it entered a forest.

The girl said: "Two more curves. Then you'll see a field and a barn. Off the road and into the barn, fast."

He took the curves with rubber screaming and almost without braking sent the car bumping across the field and into the barn. It was bigger than it had seemed from the outside. As he brought the car to a lurching halt the barn door closed.

Where he had expected to see stalls and milking machines and hay he saw an expanse of metal floor and monstrous machinery. The barn door which had been a rickety wooden slab from the outside was a gleaming sheet of metal from the inside. It glided silently shut and left no joint or seam to show where there had been an opening.

"Out," said Naomi.

As they left the car, a flexible metal arm snaked from one of the smooth walls, attached itself to the front bumper of the vehicle, and whisked it into a cubicle which opened to receive it and closed behind it.

A power-driven wheelchair sped up to them. Sitting in it was a fat man of middle age, with pendulous jowls and a totally bald head. His expression was a sardonic scowl.

"You have the plans?" he asked the girl.

"Sweetheart here has them."

"I don't know what you're talking about," the young man said.

"He knows, all right," the girl said. "He pretends to be innocent, but that is merely his training. He has them under a sticking plaster on the small of his back."

"Remove your coat and shirt," commanded the man in the wheelchair.

At that moment the floor shuddered under their feet, a gong began to clang insistently, and the giant machinery, which had been silent, throbbed into life.

The man in the wheelchair whirled and was off, shouting commands to men who materialized high on the walls in cylindrical turrets which the visitor could only think of as battle stations.

"What _is_ this place?" he asked.

He got no answer. Instead the girl grabbed his arm and pulled him off to the edge of the gigantic metal room. An opening appeared in the wall and she pushed him through it into a room beyond. The entranceway snapped shut behind them and when he looked he could see no door. The room also was windowless.

Naomi went to a metal table and as she looked down into its surface it became a screen. Mirrored in it was the mountainous countryside they had driven through to get to the barn--or what had seemed to be a barn from the outside. He looked over her shoulder.

They saw as from a height. There was the light car that had chased them from the frontier. Standing near it was a man in an officer's uniform and another in civilian clothes. They were talking and gesturing. Beside the car was a tank. As they watched, its gun fired and the structure they were in shuddered, but they heard no sound.

Lumbering up the mountain road were more tanks and a self-propelled gun. One of the tanks became enveloped in smoke and flames as they watched. After a moment the smoke cleared. The tank was gone; where it had been there was a deep crater.

Gradually, the figures in the drama below grew smaller. At the same time the vista widened, so that they saw more and more countryside. It twisted beneath them and the horizon came giddily into view. A few moments later the curvature of the earth could be plainly seen.

Everything fitted together at once. Some of the things, anyway.

"We're in a ship," he said. "Some kind of rocket-ship."

"It's a planet plane," the girl said. "We're safe now."

"Safe from what?" he asked. "What's this all about?"

She smiled enigmatically. "Hafitz could tell you, if he chose. He's the boss."

"The man in the wheelchair?"

She nodded and took out a compact. As she added lipstick to her mouth, she looked him over, between glances in her mirror.

"You don't look like the spy type. If there is a type."

"I'm not a spy. I don't know what you're talking about."

"The innocent! Go on, take off your coat and shirt. We'll save Hafitz some time."

"I'll be glad to, just to prove this is all ridiculous. A case of mistaken identity. You've made a mistake, that's what you've done."

He stood there, hesitating.

The girl gave a burst of laughter. Then she said: "All right, Sweetheart. I'll turn my back."

She did, and he pulled his shirt out of his trousers. Then he froze. Taped to the skin of his back was a flat package.

Paul Asher made the decision. He bent forward, feeling perspiration in the palms of his hands. There was a faint click.

* * * * *

Quickly he ripped the adhesive from his back. There was an instant of pain as the plaster came free. He wadded up the sticky package, dropped it to the floor and kicked it under the desk.

Then he took off his coat, tie and shirt.

"You can turn around now," he said.

"A more modest spy I've never seen. Okay," she said, "now _you_ turn around."

"As you see," he said, "there are no plans--no papers."

"No--not now. But there is a red mark on your back. What is it?"

"Oh," he said. "Oh--that's a birthmark."

She spun him around to face her. Her face was harsh. She slapped his cheek. "Where is the sticking plaster? Don't trifle with me."

Her eyes bored into his. He returned the gaze, then shrugged.

"Under the desk," he said. "I tore it off and kicked it under the desk."

"You are sensible to confess," she said.

She bent down, unwisely.

Paul Asher felt the familiar tightening in his chest as he leaned forward. The click was barely heard.

He raised his hand and brought the edge of it down hard on the back of her neck.

She crumpled and fell to the metal floor. He noticed that a smear of her freshly-applied lipstick came off on it.

He pushed the unconscious body aside and fished the packet out from under the desk. He searched the room for another hiding place.

But it was too late. A section of wall opened and Hafitz, the fat man in the wheelchair, sped in.

He wheeled past the young man, looked briefly at the unconscious girl, then whisked himself around.

"You will pay for this, my friend," he said. "But first we will have the

plans for the way-station. Where are they?"

"I don't know anything about any plans and I don't know anything about a way-station. I tried to tell the girl: it's all a crazy mistake."

"We will see," said Hafitz. He pressed a button on the arm of his wheelchair and two bruisers appeared through the walls, in the abrupt way people had of materializing here. Bruisers was the only way they could be described. They were human brutes, all muscle and malevolence.

"Take them," said Hafitz, indicating the unconscious girl and the young man. "Take them and search them for a small packet. If you do not find it, search this room. If you do not find it still, hurt the male animal. They persuade well with pain here, I understand. But do not kill him. I will be in the communications room."

He sped off, through a wall opening.

One of the bruisers picked up the girl, roughly, and disappeared with her. The other grabbed the young man and hauled him off in a third direction. The young man hastily snatched up his coat, shirt and tie en route.

They ended up in a cell of a room, about seven feet in all directions, in which the bruiser stripped him, methodically went through each piece of clothing, and then satisfied himself that he didn't have the packet anywhere on his body.

The muscle-man then raised a fist.

"Wait," his prospective victim said. He thought back quickly. "Hafitz didn't say you could bat me around till you searched the room, too."

The other spoke for the first time. "You say the truth." He put his arm down.

The young man watched intently as the bruiser went through the wall of the cell-like room.

He dressed fast. By placing his fingers in exactly the same position as

the other had done, was able to make the wall open for him.

The silver-metal corridor had two directions. He went to the right. After many turnings, at each of which he reconnoitered carefully, he came to a passageway that was damp. Why it was damp he couldn't tell, but there in the wetness were tracks which could have been made by a wheelchair.

He followed them, feeling the throb of giant engines underfoot.

* * * * *

The wheelchair tracks abruptly made a ninety-degree turn and ended at a blank wall. Somewhere beyond it must be the communications room.

He retreated and waited.

In time the wall snapped open and Hafitz sped out. The young man retreated into the maze of corridors and hoped chance would be on his side. It was. Hafitz went another way.

The young man ran back to the wall and used his fingers on it in the combination he had learned. It opened for him.

He closed it behind him and blinked at the huge instrument panel which filled almost the entire room.

One of the instruments was a color vision screen, tuned in to a room in which there was a mahogany desk, at which was seated a man in uniform. Behind him was a map of the United States.

The man in uniform was a major general in the Air Force. An aide, a lieutenant colonel, was leaning over the desk. He had a sheaf of papers in his hand. The men's conversation was audible.

"Messages have been coming in from all over Europe," the colonel was saying. "Here's the way it reconstructs:

"Our agent was en route to the rendezvous when he was intercepted by Naomi. That's the only name we have for her. She's a spy. She's worked

for half a dozen countries and her present employer could be any one of them. They were spotted as they crossed the frontier between Italy and France. Their car went into a barn and we thought we had them. But the barn turned out to be a spaceship in disguise. It took off."

So I'm their agent, Paul Asher thought. So that's what it's all about. I'm a secret agent for the United States, but they didn't tell me anything about it. This is real George, this is ... He expected to hear a faint click and leaned forward experimentally, but nothing happened. He leaned backward. Still nothing.

The colonel was answering a question from the general. "We don't know who they are, Sir. They're not from Earth, obviously. And the best scientific minds go still further--they're not even from our solar system. Whoever they are, it's clear that they don't want us to build a way-station in space."

"Those spaceships started buzzing around right after our first Moon trip," the general said. "This is the first time they've become really troublesome--now that we've got the Moon under control and are ready to build the way-station so we can get to Mars."

"That's right, Sir," said the colonel.

"Progress is a wonderful thing," said the general. "Things certainly have changed since those early days of strategic atomic bombing and guided missile experiments."

"Yes, Sir," said the colonel.

The young man in the communications room of the spaceship let his attention wander away from the scene back on Earth and experimented with some of the switches and controls. Trial and error led him to one which lit up a signal on the desk of the general.

The general flicked it on.

"Yes?" he said. He looked puzzled when he got no picture, just a voice saying, "Hello, hello."

"Yes?" he said. "Hello. Speak up, man."

"This is your agent aboard the enemy spaceship," said the young man. "Do you read me?"

"Yes," said the general. "We read you. Go ahead."

"I may not have much time. Get a fix on me if you can. And send help."

"What's your position?" the general was reacting well. He was alert and all business.

"I don't know. I've been taken prisoner, but I'm temporarily free. There isn't much time. Hafitz is bound to be back soon. He seems to be the brains of this outfit--this part of the outfit, anyway. Naomi is here, too, but I don't know whether she's with them or against them."

"Where are the plans, son?" asked the general.

"They're safe, for the moment. I can't guarantee for how long."

"I'm getting the fix," the colonel said. He was beyond the range of the young man's vision screen. "I've got him. He's still within range, but accelerating fast. We can intercept if we get up a rocket soon enough."

"Get it up," ordered the general. "Get up a squadron. Scramble the Moon patrol and send out reserves from Earth at once."

"Right!" said the colonel.

The young man was so engrossed in the makings of his rescue party that he didn't see the wall open up behind him.

There was a squeak of rubber tires and he whirled to see Hafitz, in his wheelchair, slamming toward him. The fat man's hand held a weird-looking gun.

The young man recoiled. His back pushed against a row of control buttons.

Then everything went white.

* * * * *

Paul Asher blinked his eyes, like a man awakening from a vivid dream.

The house lights went on and the manager of the theater came on the stage. He stood in front of the blank master screen with its checkerboard pattern of smaller screens, on which the several lines of action had taken place simultaneously. Paul took off his selectorscope spectacles with the earphone attachments.

"Ladies and gentlemen," the manager said. "I regret very much having to announce that this vicarion of the production _Spies from Space_ was defective. The multifilm has broken and, because of the complexity of the vikie process, it will be impossible to splice it without returning it to the laboratory.

"Ushers are at the exits with passes good for any future performance. Those of you who prefer can exchange them at the box office for a full refund of your admission price."

Paul Asher unstrapped the wired canvas band from across his chest. He put the selectorscope spectacles into the pouch on the arm of the seat and walked out of the R.K.O. Vicarion into High Street and around the corner to where his car was parked.

His roommate at the communapt, MacCloy, was still up when he got there, going over some projectos. Mac snapped off the screen and quickly swept the slides together and into a case.

"You're back early," MacCloy said.

"The multifilm broke," Paul told him.

"Oh." Mac seemed abstracted, as he often did, and again Paul wondered about this man he knew so casually and who had never confided in him about anything--especially about his government job.

"So I missed the ending," Paul said. "I guess it was near the end,

anyhow. The space patrol was on the way, but the villain, that Hafitz, was just about to blast me with his gun and I don't know how I would have got out of that."

"I remember that," Mac said. He laughed. "You must have been Positive all the way through. Like I was when I saw it. If you'd had any negative reactions--if you'd leaned back against the strap instead of forward--you'd have been at some other point in the multiplot and I wouldn't have recognized that part. Want me to tell you how it ends?"

"Go ahead. Then if I do see it again I'll change the ending somewhere along the line with a lean-back."

"Okay. There really wasn't much more. It takes so much film to provide all the plot choices that they can't make them very long.

"Well, Hafitz blasts me and misses," Mac went on, "--or blasts you and misses, to keep it in your viewpoint. When you jump back, you set off a bunch of controls. That was the control room, too, not just the communications room. Well, those controls you lean back against take the ship out of automatic pilot and send it into some wild acrobatics and that's why Hafitz misses. Also it knocks him out of the wheelchair so he's helpless and you get his gun. Also you see that the plans are still there--right where you put them, stuck to the bottom of his wheelchair."

"So that was it," said Paul.

"Yes," said Mac. "And then you cover Hafitz while he straightens out the ship and you rendezvous with the space control and they take you all into custody. You get a citation from the government. That's about it. Corny, huh?"

"But what about the girl?" Paul asked. "Is she really a spy?"

"Girl? What girl?"

"Naomi, her name was," Paul said. "You couldn't miss her. She was in the viki right at the beginning--that brunette in the fast car."

"But there wasn't any girl, Paul," Mac insisted. "Not when I saw it."

"Of course there was. There had to be--the vikies all start out the same way, no matter who sees them."

"It beats me, pal. I know I didn't see her. Maybe you dreamed up the dame."

"I don't think so," Paul said. "But of course it's possible." He yawned. "I wouldn't mind dreaming of her tonight, at that. Think I'll turn in now, Mac. I've got that long trip tomorrow, you know. Up to Canada to look over a new line of Marswool sport jackets at the All-Planets Showroom."

"Driving or flying?"

"The weather prognosis is zero-zero. I'll drive."

"Good," said Mac.

* * * * *

Paul Asher woke up late. He had a confused recollection of a dream. Something about a beautiful brunette giving him a backrub.

A look at the chrono sent the dream out of his head and he hurried through shaving and dressing.

His car was waiting for him, engine idling, at the curb. He got in, tossing his briefcase and topcoat ahead of him to the far side of the front seat. His back began to itch, insistently, and he rubbed it against the leather upholstery.

Paul adjusted the safety belt around him, and fastened it. Might as well do it now, instead of having to fool around with it later. Damn that itch, anyway! It was as if something were stuck to his skin--like a sticking plaster....

The high-powered vehicle purred smoothly as it took a long, rising curve. The road climbed steadily toward the mountaintop city ahead.

The scene was familiar.

The itching of his back spread and became a prickly feeling in the small hairs at the nape of his neck.

He knew now that he was not alone in the car. He looked in the rear-view mirror.

Naomi.

She was looking at him insolently, her wide red mouth in a half smile.

She said: "Just keep going, Sweetheart, as fast as you can."

... THE END

Transcriber's Note:

This etext was produced from If Worlds of Science Fiction January 1954. Extensive research did not uncover any evidence that the U.S. copyright on this publication was renewed. Minor spelling and typographical errors have been corrected without note.

MINKA

from *A Divided Heart and Other Stories*, by Paul Heyse

Translator: Constance Stewart Copeland

It was a few years after the French war. The fall review had incidentally brought together again a number of young officers who had earned their iron crosses in the array of the Loire, and they had invited good comrades from other regiments to join them and celebrate the reunion from an inexhaustible bowl. Midnight was past. The talk, which for some time had concerned personal recollections and experiences, had taken a thoughtful turn and was becoming profound. It was impossible to realize how many were absent without touching on the everlasting riddle of human life. Besides, the horrible death of a popular young hero, who had fallen into the hands of the Franc-tireurs, and been killed in the most revolting manner, and the consequent destruction of a treasure of brilliant gifts and talents, hopes and promises--had brought again to the front the old problem, whether universal destiny and the fate of the individual will be according to our idea of justice; or whether the individual's weal or woe will be quietly subordinated to the vast, mysterious design of the universe. All the well-known reasons for and against a providence ruling morally and judging righteously, as human beings conceive it, were discussed again and again; and at length the oldest and most distinguished of the young soldiers formulated, from the animated argument, this result:--that even the most enthusiastic optimist, in face of the crying horrors to which poor humanity is exposed, cannot prove the existence of a compensating justice on earth; indeed, can only save his belief in a righteous God by hoping for a world to come.

"But will donkeys go to heaven, too?" suddenly asked a calm, rich voice from a quiet corner.

For a moment all were silent. Then followed an outburst of gay laughter, agreeably enlivening to the majority, who were tired of the philosophical talk.

"Hear! hear!" cried some.

"One will not be able to understand his own speech at doomsday if all the resurrected donkeys bray to one another," said a lively young captain. "Although, Eugene, if the sainted Antonius's pig is in heaven--"

"And so many pious sheep!" another broke in.

"You forget that the question is long since decided," said a third; "one has only to read Voltaire's 'Pucelle' in so many cantos!"

"Were you merely joking, Eugene?" then asked the senior president, who had not joined in the laugh, "or was the question seriously meant, because it is certainly not yet decided whether or no an immortal soul lives in animals also?"

The person thus addressed was a young man about thirty years of age, the only one at the banquet who wore civilian's dress. A severe wound had forced him to give up a military career. Since then he had lived on his small estate, more occupied with the study of military science than with the tilling of his fields. He had come to the city on the occasion of the review in order to see his old friends.

"The question," he now said very earnestly, "is really not my own, but is a quotation, whose brusque simplicity embarrassed me myself not long ago. A strange little story, certainly not a cheerful one, depends on it. But since we have again soared into speculations which are beyond jesting, it may perhaps be fitting if I tell where the quotation originated. I can hardly maintain that the story is calculated to throw any light on the dark problem."

"Only tell it," cried one after another.

"Who knows whether the donkey that you will ride before us may not finally open his mouth, like Balaam's prophetic ass, and teach us the system of the world."

Eugene shook his head with a peculiar smile, and began. "You know that I suffered from my wound during the entire winter of '71 and '72, and could only limp around with a cane. When spring came, I surrendered

myself to the care of my married sister. My brother-in-law's manor is surrounded by endless pine forests, in which I was to take air baths. Whatever I gained in physical strength, as I wandered about each day in those lonely thickets, or lay lazily buried in cushions of deep, luxuriant moss, I lost again in my moral condition. Even in the hospital I had not seemed to myself such a miserable cripple as here. Everything about me was overflowing with life and strength; every old knot bore countless bright-green shoots; even a rotten stump made itself useful as barracks for a swarming army of ants--and I, condemned to detestable idleness at twenty-four--enough! I moped about half the time, and was on very bad terms with God and the world.

"About this time, too, I lived through a sickness which might have ended my brooding. The neighborhood is thinly populated; the people are very poor; the women frightfully ugly,--Bohemian types degenerated by crossing with the Saxons, pinched and rendered half savage through privation and suffering. But I was perfectly contented that nothing charming crossed my path. It would have made the consciousness of my invalidism still more painful. You know, indeed, how long it takes for the last trace of the typhoid poison, so paralyzing to all energy, to disappear from one's system. The North Sea was to do me this service.

"Well, for several weeks, like mad Roland, though somewhat more mildly, I roamed through pine and fir-covered ravines without making a shot, although a hunting-piece was slung at my back. It was truly, in spite of all world-griefs, a heavenly time; never have I had such intimate acquaintance with nature, never felt so vividly what is meant by 'our mother earth' and 'our father air.' But that does not belong here. I will come to the point.

"One afternoon I allowed myself to be lured farther than usual from the house by a most beautiful path winding among young woods, whose slender trees, scarcely taller than I, allowed the May sunlight to stream through unchecked. When I found myself entirely astray, I decided to strike through to the edge of the forest, in order to regain an open view. A gentle slope, sparsely covered with birches and berry-bushes, led upwards. Beyond, through the tall firs which enclosed the clearing like a fence, I could see blue mountain-tops shimmering in the distance, and knew that I might thence easily find my way. But as I came out of the forest, I realized for the first time how far I had

wandered. From the forest edge the land sank by a tolerably steep slope to a plain; and far below lay a small town, well known to me on the map, but so distant from our estate, that in all my reconnoitring I had never seen it till now. I was startled when I realized where I was, for, with my lame leg, I could not possibly undertake to return on foot. But I thought I might obtain a team in the village.

"I seated myself on a newly-fallen trunk to rest a little before descending to the town. The land beneath me lay in the deep calm of afternoon; thin clouds of smoke drifting up from the chimneys of the old houses announced that the good housewives were making their coffee. The broad, level plain, gayly checkered with fields of promising, green crops, stretched beyond; while almost exactly half way between the forest-edge and the first houses, and bordered by a few bushes and elders, lay a great fish-pond, peculiarly dark in color, although the purest spring-heaven was mirrored therein. The ground about it was marshy, and it seemed as though all the water of the neighborhood flowed into the depression as into some monstrous cistern. I do not know why the black basin appeared so uncanny to me, for the birds nesting in the shrubbery on its banks flew over it continually with cheerful twitterings. But my gloomy humor drew nourishment just then from the most innocent sources.

"When I finally raised my eyes to look about for some smooth, gradually-descending path, I noticed at the right, scarcely a stone's throw from my seat, a forlorn, mean little house standing in shadow close by the roots of the foremost trees. The old, tumbled-down fence surrounding a bit of ground; the dove-cot, in which no living thing was stirring; the tiled roof, whose damages had been poorly repaired with shingles and stones from the fields--all looked desolate and dilapidated, but since a path must surely lead thence to the town, I arose and dragged myself slowly towards the hut.

"As soon as I perceived the extreme desolation of the old barracks, I gave up my conjecture that a lumberman dwelt there. All the mortar had fallen away from the wall on the weather side, and the rain must have had free entrance through the holes in the deeply sunken roof. The piece of land behind the crumbling fence, which in times past might have supported a little garden or a few vegetable beds, had become a waste rubbish heap, upon which a single black hen tripped about,

excitedly scratching between the weeds and nettles for something eatable. The north side, turned towards the slope, had two small windows with broken panes; and in the middle, a door standing wide open. I glanced into the unattractive entrance. No human being was to be seen or heard. I was about to go back and follow a little foot-path which seemed to wind down into the valley, when I was startled, indeed, truly frightened, by a donkey's bray; for never in my life have I heard that odd cry given so passionately, and with such peculiarly mournful modulation, as at that moment.

"The cry of pain came from the other side of the house. As I turned the corner, I saw in the meadow, close to the wall, an idyllic group crouched in the young grass: an old woman, clothed in a torn jacket of flowered calico and a coarse woollen petticoat, and wearing wound about her head a gray handkerchief, from beneath which her black hair, thickly sprinkled with gray, hung down in disorder; and near her, stretched upon the ground, a young donkey with noticeably slender limbs, dark-edged ears, and a coat of silver-gray, adorned on the back with a black stripe extending to the head. It was a fine animal, an honor to its race, and it would certainly have taken a prize at any show. But I immediately perceived why the poor creature relieved its oppressed heart in so particularly doleful a manner. A hand's-breadth on its left shoulder-blade was disfigured by a foul wound; this the old woman was attempting to cover with wet bandages, although the wounded brute restively tried to prevent her merciful ministrations with kicks and stampings of its forelegs. A shallow bowl by the woman's side held some dark liquid, with which she saturated the rag in order to cool the wound. She quietly continued this operation as I approached her.

"Good-morning, dame!" said I. She merely nodded her head wearily. Beginning to speak of the wound, I asked how it had been received, and what remedy she was using. No answer. It occurred to me that she did not understand German. But as I turned away, exclaiming half to myself, 'What a pity! Such a beautiful brute!' her gray eyes suddenly flashed so powerfully upon me from under her bushy, black brows, that the whole withered, leather-colored face seemed ten years younger.

"Yes indeed, sir!" she said in notably pure German, with but a slight Bohemian accent. 'It is truly a pity, and Minka is certainly beautiful. If only you had seen her before she was hurt! She could jump about

almost like a young horse, and her coat was like silk and velvet. Now, for seven months she has lain thus miserably on her belly, and if she gets up on her legs, how her knees bend, poor creature! Besides, what use is she? "Betty Lamitz," said the forest warder only yesterday, as he passed and saw the trouble I had with the brute--for now one must bring even its bit of fodder close to its muzzle--"you should have her killed," said he; "the skinner will give you a thaler for the hide." But no! said I; it's only a beast, but it shall have care like any other Christian being, or like an honest servant fallen sick in service! Yes, so I said. Whoa, whoa, Minka! don't roll about so! Look, sir, she lies on her back and rubs her wound all the time, so no plaster holds, and it spreads farther and farther. Whoa! Be still!

"Then, fairly embracing the beast, she tried to quiet it, and keep it in its bed. Suddenly she released it, ran to a wooden well standing in shadow back of the house, and having filled a low pail from the old stone trough into which the water was trickling down, she thrust it under her charge's pink muzzle. Minka drank in long draughts, and her feverish excitement visibly abated. The old woman sat near her, looking on with great contentment, and seeming once more entirely oblivious to my presence.

"At length I repeated my inquiry as to the origin of the bad wound between the shoulder-blades. But the old woman again remained silent; she merely sighed, and scratched her lean arms with her withered fingers till white streaks stood up on the brown skin.

"Yes, yes!" she said absently, after a long while--"such a poor female! What matters beauty against bad luck? And how she has worked, always cheerfully and willingly! I could load her as much as I wished, she never once kicked, or even shook her ears at me. To be sure, I have brought her up from her tenth day. She was a twin. The forester at Freithof had a she-ass that presented him one morning with Minka and her sister. "Would you like to have a handsome nursling, Mother Lamitz?" said he, just for a joke. Well, I held him to his word. He owed me a little gold for a piece of linen that I had woven for him. A couple of florins were still lacking, and for them I took the young ass. I had trouble enough, first in getting it home, and then in raising it, for milk was scarce with us. But we have never rued it. A hard worker, sir, this Minka! We have had to drag many things from the

woods, berries and mushrooms down to market in summer, then our winter wood, and whatsoever else was needful. I--good heavens! I can trace all my bones, although I am barely fifty, and Hannah--well, she was still too weak. And look you, such a faithful beast, a god-send, our only help--to be so hurt and disgraced in its young years--oh!"

"'Dame,' said I, 'look at me! I too am still young, yet I limp through the world, and my food must be brought to me because I can no longer gain it by my own strength; and whoever gives a thaler for _my_ hide is a fool and a spendthrift. Yet who knows, but that sometime we shall both prance gayly about once more.'

"I chatted in this strain for some time to cheer her, but, without heeding me, she stared fixedly at the wound. She had meanwhile covered it with a firm plaster, since the brute would no longer suffer the bathing.

"'Tell me once for all,' she suddenly commenced, and by the gleam of her eyes I saw that when young she must have been far from homely--'tell me once for all, sir, do you believe that donkeys go to heaven?'

"I laughed.

"Why do you ask that, mother?

"I once asked our parson about it. He said it was a foolish question; that only Christian people go to heaven; and that animals have no immortal souls. "But, parson," said I, "if the great God is just and merciful, why doesn't He pity the beasts too, as human beings do if they are not scoundrels? For instance, why does Minka's sister live like a princess, have nothing to do but draw a little play-wagon in which the young masters take an occasional pleasure drive, always receive kind words and the best fodder, and even have a love-affair with the valley-miller's donkey? And our Minka, who has just as good a character, who wears herself out with work, and is often on her legs with a load for ten hours together, now has all four struck from under her, and if she should die to-morrow, what pleasure in life has she had? Is that just, parson? And if it is not sometime paid back to her there above--" But then he forbade me to speak, and said such blasphemy

led straight to hell. You tell me, sir, do you know anything about it?"

"You can imagine that I did not have the most spirited expression, when the pistol was thus placed against my breast, and the explanation of the world-secret demanded of me. Fortunately, however, just at that moment a woman's clear voice began to sing within the house, and with it one heard a child's feeble crying, which the song was evidently intended to still.

"Who is singing there, Mother Lamitz?" I asked.

"Who should it be but Hannah?" she grumbled.

"Your daughter? May I venture to look in at her?"

"The old woman did not reply; muttering to herself, she took the pail and carried it back to the well; then she rolled forward a wheelbarrow piled high with grass and weeds, and busied herself in giving handfuls to the sick beast, almost shoving the food into its mouth. I did not wait long for an expressed permission, but approached the house, and, after knocking, entered by the door at the left.

"A suffocating steam greeted me, mixed with the smell of some drying clothes, which hung across the room on a tightly stretched rope. I saw immediately that there were only a few miserable swaddling-clothes and baby-frocks, coarse and much patched.

"In one corner stood a great loom, thickly covered with dust; in the other, upon a heap of straw, distinguishable from the bed of an animal only by a woollen covering, sat a fair-haired young woman, holding a half naked babe at her breast. She herself had nothing on her body but a shirt, which had fallen far down on her shoulders, and a red woollen petticoat, which left her white feet visible to the ankles.

"As I entered, she gazed at me searchingly, and for an instant ceased her singing. She seemed to have expected someone else; but, seeing that I was an entire stranger, she at once recommenced her cradle-song, though somewhat more softly, apparently not at all disturbed because I had surprised her in the performance of a mother's most sacred duty, and in such incomplete attire.

"As she sang she occasionally smiled at me, showing the pretty teeth in her large mouth; and I noticed that she clasped the child closer to her bared breast, and tried to draw the shirt up over her shoulders. Therewith a slight redness tinged her round, white face, and her blue eyes assumed a half imploring, half simple and dreamily vacant, expression.

"I excused myself for intruding; her mother had allowed me to come in; I would immediately go out again if she wished. She hummed her song without appearing to notice me; but from time to time she would suddenly lift her eyes, as if to see whether I were still there; then bite her full, red under-lip; rock the child back and forth; and, with her bare feet in the straw, beat time to her song.

"The child, which was but a few months old, had drunk and cried itself to sleep. The cradle-song grew ever softer; at length the young mother, kneeling down, wrapped the little one, which lay before her like some rosy, waxen doll, in a great woollen shawl. In the corner near the pillow I observed a little couch made of old rags and tatters. On this the baby was gently and carefully laid, and, in spite of the heat, covered yet again.

"Then the mother, always as if entirely alone in the room, began to let down and rebraid her tangled, yellow hair. The rest of her toilet seemed to be perfectly satisfactory.

"Indeed, no elegant costume could have displayed the poor young woman's charming figure to more advantage. The face was too like the old woman's to be considered pretty. Yet in the coloring and youthful contour of that round little head lay a charm, which was not lessened even by an evident trace of absent-mindedness, or downright imbecility. I felt intense sympathy for the poor, half-foolish creature, singing her lullaby so contentedly in such pitiable deprivation of all usual nursery comforts.

"She did not answer any of my questions even by a gesture. Since they had plenty of wood and did not grudge it, the oven was heated almost to bursting; although the air without was mild enough, even here on the windy height. So I did not wait until she finished arranging her heavy

braids, but laid a shining thaler on the edge of the loom, nodded kindly to the harmless creature, and left the room.

"I found the old woman no longer by her sick darling, but at the well, where she was cleaning a handful of turnips and cutting them into a pot.

"'Mother Lamitz,' said I, 'you have a very pretty daughter. But she would not speak a word to me. Is she always so silent with strangers?'

"The old woman contracted her brows and stared gloomily at the pot which she held between her knees. In this attitude she might have served an artist as model for a witch preparing some noxious potion.

"'Silent?' she asked after a pause. 'No, sir; it is not her tongue that is lacking. When she will, she can chatter like a starling. The lack is above. She was so even as a child. Well, it was not such a great shame. If she had had the best sense, would that have helped a poor, fatherless thing like her? Did it matter to me that I had all my five senses right? I was cheated in spite of them, and therefore I care not a whit whether the brat to which she has given life takes after her, as people say, or after me. Either way, the little Mary will sometime become a mother on the sly, as it came into the world on the sly. It is in the family, sir, it is in the family.'

"And then, after a pause, for I knew not what to say to this frank worldly wisdom--'Besides, the child will hardly grow old. Hannah treats it too foolishly. Indeed, reason has nothing to do with her actions. And when the winter comes, and we all must hunger--it is said, though, that God lets no sparrow fall from a roof without His will--I am curious to see whether He will trouble Himself about us four poor females up here.'

"Therewith she gazed pityingly at the donkey, which was now crouching quietly in its bedding. I could have laughed to see her so unconcernedly consider gray, long-eared Minka as the fourth in the family; but the horrible cold-bloodedness with which she spoke of her child and grandchild was not humorous.

"'You seem to care much more tenderly for the donkey than for your

poor, little grandchild,' I said severely.

"She nodded her head calmly.

"So it is,' she said; 'Minka needs me more. If I die to-day, she must come to a miserable end. Do you think Hannah would throw her even an armful of grass, although the poor beast can no longer seek it herself? No; she has no thought except for her baby, and beyond that, for the rascal who is its father. She waits for him every evening at sunset, although it is already a half year since he last crossed our threshold. And withal she is as happy as any one can wish to be, considers the dear God a good man, and lets her old mother do all the housework without any help. Why should I pity her or her brat? Both are already as if in heaven, and if it goes hard with them, and they must hunger and freeze, can they not make that good hereafter in Paradise? But Minka, look you, sir, has had no lover, and brought no young one into the world, and when she dies she will be thrown in the flaying-place, and on doomsday, when we other poor sinners gather our bones together, of her nothing at all will be left, and it will never be credited to her that she had a harder life than her twin sister. Look you, some other poor Christian mortal must pity the beasts if our Lord Jesus Himself cannot bring Himself to do it.'

"This logic allowed no reply. But I confess that the future of the little human being was more momentous to me, in spite of its immortal soul, than the question whether Minka would lose or not in the final distribution of justice. If to-morrow the only person among these 'four females' who had sound human sense should be struck by lightning, what would then become of the poor fool and her baby?

"Does the father do nothing at all for the little one?" I asked at last. "The child is as beautiful as if carved out of ivory, and it is by no means certain that it will become like the mother. Has he never shown himself again?"

"He!" exclaimed the old woman, thrusting the knife with which she had been cleaning the turnips deep into the wooden well-spout. "If I should drag him to justice, he would swear himself free, that he would, although he is the town-judge's own son. Do you think I did not see it in him, even the first time when he came into our little house to

kindle his pipe at the hearth--so he said, the villain! He is unfortunately as pretty to look at as he is bad within, and the stupid thing, Hannah she was still innocent, and I could let her wander all day long in the woods alone with Minka, filling the two panniers with berries and mushrooms--she thought of no man then, and I--God knows how it came about! Just because she is so foolish and weak in her head, I imagined that no one would trouble about her. But she pleased the judge's son, and was herself instantly carried away with him. After that I had trouble enough with her. She had worked bravely till then in the house and garden, and no work was too hard for her. Now, of a sudden, half the day her hands in her lap, and if I began to scold she would smile at me like a child waking from a lovely dream. If I sent her to the woods, she would bring the baskets back to the house scarcely a quarter full. It was Minka's misfortune too. You cannot believe, sir, how the beast clung to Hannah; it had human sense, anyway more than Hannah, and realized that the smart fellow with the black mustache had nothing good in mind. It always ran after the stupid girl, and gave a loud bray to warn her. I saw everything well enough, but what could I do? Scoldings and warnings were useless; she did not understand. And one cannot shut up a grown woman, who will use force to get out. She would have climbed from the window or even the chimney to rush into the very arms of ruin. Well, and so it happened. But the worst of it was that Minka suffered for it too. One evening she followed the girl into the woods, and soon afterward came limping home alone, with the wound in her neck, groaning and crying like a human being. Hannah came back an hour later. I questioned her closely as to how the brute had received the wound. "Ha!" said she, laughing insolently, "she screamed all the time and crowded between us, although Frank tried to drive her back with blows; so he suddenly became angry, drew his knife, and gave her a thrust." I struck the shameless thing for laughing about it, and put salve on the wound. But Minka rolled on her back as if crazy, and would bear no bandage, and so it has grown worse with her every day, and with Hannah too. Well, at least she has had her way, and nothing much better could have happened to her. Who would take one like her for his honest wife? And if sometime she realizes that it is useless to wait for her lover, and becomes crazy with grief at his wickedness, then she has little wit to lose. Whereas Minka, sir, who is cleverer than many people, believe me, she lies for days pondering why good and bad are so unequally divided on the earth; why she has nothing but a ruined life, while her sister trots about

elegant and happy; and why our good Lord did not arrange it so that donkeys might go to heaven, and obtain their reward for all the flaying and toiling, beating and kniving, they have to bear.'

"She uttered these last words with such violence that she was obliged to stop for breath. Then, brushing back the loose hairs at her neck, she tied her head-cloth more firmly, and took the pot of turnips on her arm.

"'I must go in, sir,' she said hoarsely, 'or I shall go to bed hungry. Do you know the town-judge and his fine son? It does not matter. He will not have to pay for what he did to my girl and to Minka until he stands before God's throne. And for the rest, why should his conscience prick him? She wished nothing better; indeed, we all wish nothing better; if we were not silly, you men could not be bad. So it will be as long as the world lasts. At doomsday I shall not complain of that, but I shall ask our Lord whether donkeys go to heaven too, of that you may be sure--of that you may certainly be sure!'

"She nodded her head vigorously, passed by without another look at me, and disappeared in the house.

"You can imagine that, as I descended the slope, passing the black water, and finally reaching the village, all that I had seen and heard continually pursued me. Even when I had secured a carriage at the inn, and was rolling along the highway towards my brother-in-law's house, the figure of the old woman, and especially that of her blonde daughter with the naked babe clasped to her breast, seemed actually before my eyes. It chanced that my driver was an elderly man, who could give trustworthy answers to my questions about the inmates of the little house on the hill. He remembered Betty Lamitz's sudden appearance there twenty years ago very well. Her own home was in a neighboring place, where, her mother having died without leaving any property, the parish refused to receive her. She was a servant in an aristocratic house in Prague, and behaved properly enough until one of the sons of the house, an officer home on a furlough, noticed her. She had been a fine-looking person even at thirty, in spite of her flat nose and broad cheeks, a maid with unusual eyes, and when she laughed--which to be sure she seldom did--she could cut out many younger women even then. But things simply went the usual way, in spite of her cleverness, and although she

had always said she would never do as her own mother had done. Of course her master did not keep her in the house. He gave her a suitable sum of money, with which she bought the forsaken hill-house and the bit of garden plot, and since then, as she would not go into service again, perhaps could not, she had lived there and brought Hannah up, in perfect retirement. For the first few years the young count remembered her, and sent her something. After awhile he failed to do this, and she was obliged to struggle along by herself. She had done so; and certainly no one could accuse her of grief at her child's lack of reason.

"Then my driver spoke of the sad affair with the judge's son, against whom he expressed himself in very strong terms. Every one knew about it. But he was the only son of a most respectable family, and no one could expect him to make amends for the foolish mis-step by an honest marriage. A wild, insane thing! Why didn't the old woman watch her better? If he did a little something for the child, no one would blame him much for this youthful sin.

"I listened without entering into any discussion of the moral aspect of the case. In my heart--I know not why--I felt such intense sympathy for the poor creature, that if her betrayer had come in my way, I would have thrashed him with much pleasure.

"My first action, when I saw my people again, was to tell them of my experience, and induce my good sister to take some interest in the neglected young woman. She was true to her sympathetic nature. The next day she sent her 'Mamselle,' an experienced, elderly person, in a carriage to Mother Lamitz's hut, with a basket containing all sorts of good things--provisions for several weeks, baby-clothes, and several uncut dress pieces to provide for the winter. To this I added a trifle in cash, fully intending to go in person very soon, and see if this feeble attempt to make up the deficiencies of the world-system had been at all effectual.

"But I did not go. Our physician ordered me to take sea-baths earlier than I expected. I merely heard that our gifts were received by the old woman with but moderate thanks, and by the young mother with child-like exultation. Then I departed, remaining away the entire summer, and the inmates of that forest hut soon became of as little moment to me as any

beggar into whose hat one tosses a groschen.

"Even when, after having washed away in the sea my invalidism and its accompanying world-sickness, I returned to the estate in the autumn for hunting, it did not occur to me for several weeks to inquire about the 'four females.' My sister and her husband had themselves been away, and been occupied with entirely different things. On a lonely tramp which I undertook one cold, cloudy, disagreeable day in the middle of October, I suddenly recollected that I had wandered over the same forest-path five months before, and that it had finally led me to the donkey with the 'immortal soul.' What might have happened to Minka in the meantime?

"I stepped along more briskly, for evening was already coming on. It was dark and comfortless in the forest; the moisture dripped heavily from the pines; the little clearings, with their bushes and birches, were not so cheerful, in spite of the red berries hanging plentifully on their faded branches, as on that day in May, when I alone wore a troubled face. When I finally emerged from the pines at the edge of the height, the land below me and the purplish peaks on the horizon looked as strange as if a terrible storm were impending. The air was perfectly still; one heard each drop falling on the dry leaves, and, from time to time, the crows, very numerous in that locality, cawing in the treetops. The noise was so hateful to me that, in a sort of sudden fury, I snatched my gun from my shoulder, and fired into the unsuspecting flock. A single bird fell fluttering and quivering at my feet. I felt ashamed of this childish outburst and hurried towards the hut, which, standing in its old place, and in the same condition, looked extremely desolate in the murky evening mist.

"The enclosed space had beautified itself with half a dozen tall sunflowers and with several rows of pumpkin-vines growing over the rubbish-heap; but the black hen had evidently failed to outlive the summer. On the side of the house where the brook flowed, and where Minka had lain, there was no longer any trace of her. Possibly it was now too cold on this damp couch for the poor, wounded beast. But where had she gone? I laughed to myself as I realized that the fate of the brute creature was more interesting to me than that of the hut's human inmates. Of them nothing was to be seen or heard.

"In the room where the loom stood, excepting that the straw-bed was

empty, everything appeared as at my first visit. But the oven was cold and all the windows were open. I pressed the door-latch of the single, mean chamber on the right of the narrow hall. Here I was amazed to find one at least of the 'four females,' the good Minka herself. She lay on a litter of yellow leaves, moss, and pine-needles, close to a low hearth, whereon coals were still glowing; and as she saw me enter, she lifted her head wearily.

"The old woman must have housed here, since, besides cooking utensils, all sorts of woman's trumpery was lying about, while on the other side of the hearth stood an ancient, grandfather's chair, with torn cushions, plainly Mother Lamitz's bedstead. She had evidently brought her sick darling into her immediate vicinity.

"I approached the poor creature and stroked her coat, for which attention her ears wagged a doleful gratitude. The wound had grown worse; indeed, her whole condition was serious, and for the first time I saw on an animal something like the hippocratic face. Seeing that I was friendly, she made a painful effort to unburden her distressed heart; but no longer able to express herself satisfactorily, she soon became silent again, and with an indescribably piteous look let her tongue loll from her mouth, thus taking away her last trace of beauty in my eyes. As I could not help her, I went out in a few moments, leaving the door open; for the close air, which I could scarcely breathe, must have been equally unbearable for a sick donkey.

"Outside I looked about in all directions. Of grandmother, mother, or child--not a trace. In the forest--but what could they be seeking there so late, and in such horrible weather? They have gone down to the town, thought I, to make some purchases. But nobody knows when they will return.

"To await them in the damp hut was out of the question. I thought that perhaps I might meet them on the way down, as I intended to descend and return by the highroad, instead of the dark, slippery forest path. So once again I took the little path between the meadows, and heard then, for the first time, a muffled sound of musical instruments, principally clarionets and contrabasses, evidently coming from the inn in the town below. Although dance music, it was far from merry; indeed, it seemed but a proper accompaniment to the melancholy song heaven and earth were

singing together; as if cloud spirits were playing a waltz to which they might whirl madly over the cold mountain-tops.

"The neighborhood is not musical. Only occasionally, when a band of wandering Bohemians strays into this corner of the hills, does one hear merry tunes in lively time; but even a Bohemian band can seldom set in motion the clumsy feet of the men and maids.

"However, that scarcely belongs to my subject. I will be brief. I had not taken twenty steps when I saw, down by the fishpond, sitting on a mossy stone, a woman's motionless figure, with the back turned toward me. She seemed to be staring into the black water. I could scarcely see the outline, yet I recognized her at once.

"'Mother Lamitz!' I cried, 'Mother Lamitz!'

"At the third call, and when I was very close to her, she slowly turned her head, but I could not see her eyes.

"'Why do you sit here on a wet stone, Mother Lamitz?' I asked. 'Have you thrown a net and do you wish to haul your catch? Or for whom are you waiting in this unhealthy fog?'

"She looked straight into my face, evidently trying to remember the person to whom these features and this voice belonged. But it dawned on her very slowly.

"I helped somewhat by recalling to her mind my spring visit, and telling her that since then I had often considered whether or no donkeys would go to heaven, and had never arrived at any conclusion. She listened silently, but I was not certain that she rightly understood my meaning, for she nodded continually, even when I asked a question demanding a negative answer.

"But when I mentioned her daughter's name, she became suddenly alert, looking suspiciously at me from under her thick brows.

"'What do you want with Hannah?' she said. 'She is not at home. But she is very well, she and her brat. Did I tell you she was a trifle weak in the head? In that I lied. She had more sense than most of the foolish

geese. Oh, I wish that I might have gone away so, but there are different gifts, and how does the Testament say? Those who are poor in spirit--yes, yes. O thou merciful One!"

"Stopping suddenly, she spread her hands on her knees and let her head fall upon her breast.

"She seemed more and more uncanny to me. It was ghastly there by the bank; the bats were beginning to flit among the low bushes, and the rising wind brought a musty swamp odor. From below came the unceasing music of the clarionets and basses.

"Merely to break the silence, I said, 'There seems to be high festival in the inn down yonder. Is it a feast?'

"She sprang to her feet, again looking distrustfully at me. 'Have you only just heard it? They have piped and fiddled so since noonday, and will go on till midnight. I have stopped my ears, but it is useless. Weddings are not funerals--one knows that very well--but if they knew, if they knew! To be sure they would not have one waltz the less. O thou merciful One!'

"'Whose wedding is it?'

"Spitting violently, she cast a furious look across the pond towards the house from which the sounds arose.

"'Go down there and look at the pair for yourself,' she snarled; 'they suit each other well. He is bad and handsome, and she is stupid and rich. A brewer's daughter, she measures her money by the bushel. But she has reason enough to answer a question correctly, and she did not say no when the parson asked her if she wished the judge's son for a husband.'

"'The judge's son! He?' Now, indeed, I knew the cause of the old woman's fury.

"'Poor Hannah! And does she know what is going on down there?'

"'How could she help knowing, sir? Do you think there are not

sympathetic souls enough to carry such news wherever they are likely to earn God's blessing for it? She sat just before the door with her baby on her lap; she was decked out in her best clothes, that blue dress, you know, which the lady baroness sent her; and her baby was dancing to the music. Then the druggist's maid came down, pretending that she passed by accident, but it was the wickedest curiosity, dear sir, to see how the poor fool would act when she heard that her lover was holding his wedding feast down there. She did not tell it to Hannah. "Mother Betsey!" she screamed in to me, "the judge's son! What do you say to that?" and then she abused the badness of the world. I merely blinked at her, for I thought I should sink into the earth. I never believed he would marry Hannah, but she waited for him every evening, and was so happy doing so, that she might have expected him for all eternity, and sung her cradle-songs contentedly. And now the whole baseness of it, and the news of the marriage with the brewer's daughter, to come on her so suddenly--as if a trusted friend had thrust a knife in her breast. The words stuck in the spiteful tell-tale's throat as she saw what she had done. She said she must hurry; her mistress expected her, and she ran off. I went out and saw the poor thing sitting on the bank, with her head leaning back on the wall as if too heavy for her, and her eyes and mouth wide open.

""Hannah!" I coaxed, "do not believe it--she lied," and as much more as I could bear to say. She did not speak, but all at once laughed aloud, and stood up, holding her child fast in her arms.

""Where are you going?" I said. "Come into the house. I will brew you some elder tea." But it was as if she did not hear me. She went slowly away from the house, down the path. I followed, trying to hold her back by her clothing, but there was something superhuman in her; her face was rigid and deathly pale. "Hannah," said I, "you are not going to him? Think what they would say if you went to the wedding. They would say you were out of your wits, and by and by the law would come and take away the child, because they dare not leave it with an idiot."

""That brought her to her senses for a moment. She stood still, clasping the child silently, and sighing as if her soul would leave her body. I thought I had won, and that she would turn back with me and gradually give in. If she could have cried it would have been her salvation, but her eyes were perfectly dry, and I saw her stare

continually at the house down there, as if she would pierce the walls and destroy that bad man and his bridge with the wreath and veil. I begged her to come into the house. I realized then that I had nothing in the world but her, and I told her so, asking her to forgive me for all my roughness and unkindness to her. Dear God, when one is so miserable, and another hungry mouth comes into the house! But she heard nothing. The music seemed to bewitch her; she began to rock the child back and forth; then of a sudden she gave a loud cry, as if her heart had broken, and before I knew what she meant to do, she was rushing down to the pond. Her loose hair streamed after her, the blue clothes fluttered, she ran so fast, and--O thou merciful One!--with my own eyes I saw it--child and grandchild! I tried to scream, I was choking; I ran like a madman; as I came down, I saw only the black water, bubbling like a kettle at the place where--'

"She sprang up, and stood half bowed among the damp marsh grasses like a picture of despair, both arms outstretched toward the now motionless water.

"I could not speak a word. Every instant I thought she would throw herself in after them. The spot where we were standing seemed peculiarly suitable for a suicide. The bank shelved perpendicularly into the depths; no rushes grew out of the water; the alder bushes, retreating, left a gap several feet in width; and even close to shore the water was as dark as if the depths were bottomless.

"But the old woman seemed to intend nothing violent. Her body relaxed again and her arms fell loosely on her hips.

"Do you see anything there?' she asked suddenly, in an undertone.

"Where?"

"Down there by the willow? No; it is nothing. I thought her hair came to the surface. But she is lying at the bottom. At first something yellow floated out on the water--I would swear it was her hair--and the long rake there, left since haying-time--if I had taken it, and fished for the hair with it, and twisted it fast around the prongs, I believe I could have pulled her to land even then. But say for yourself, sir, what would it have mattered? She would have jumped in again. And

wouldn't it have been wicked to rob her of the rest she has found down there? Who knows that I should have drawn out the poor brat with her! And without her only plaything, what could she do in the world?"

"She stopped again, rubbing her lean shoulders with her crossed arms as if she felt a fever-chill. The music paused in the inn below; I heard the old woman's quick, gasping breaths, and now and then a disconnected word as if of prayer. This sad stillness was suddenly interrupted by a hoarse bray from the woods above. We both looked around.

"Lame Minka stood before the hut's door, giving her most doleful signal of distress. Against the dark background the outline of the beast's gray form was plainly visible; we could even see her shake her drooping ears. She must have noticed us, for though we did not call her, she started down the rough and tiresome road to her old nurse.

"Are you coming, too?" said the old woman. 'Are you thirsty, because I forgot to fill your pail? Do you see, sir, that I am right? Minka has human reason. She too would make an end of her trouble and misery. And it is better so; it will take her at once from her suffering, and I--do you know, that I believe even yet that donkeys go to heaven? If not, why have they human reason? Who knows, when he fears to die, that it is really the end? And now look at Minka, how steadily she trots toward the black water. Come, Minka, come, poor fool! We will help you down.'

"The brute came to the stone where the old woman was crouching. It thrust its large head in her lap, and fell on its knees. The old woman helped it up again.

"Come, Minka,' she repeated, 'it will do no harm, and perhaps may help you to eternal happiness. Hannah has gone before, with little Mary. Mother Betsey will soon follow.'

"She drew the reluctant animal to the edge of the pond and tried to force it in. But entreaties and caresses were as vain as the pushes and blows to which she finally resorted. The poor victim, its whole body trembling, braced all four feet against the bank and gave a piteous cry. The old woman cast an imploring glance at me.

"You have a gun at your back, sir. Will you not do my Minka this last

kindness, and help her to her salvation? The Lord God will repay you the little powder and lead which you spend on a tortured creature; and if there is justice, and we meet again up yonder, Minka, too, will not be wanting, and then you shall see that, after the ass that bore our Lord into Jerusalem, there will be none more beautiful than Minka in all Paradise.'

"How could I withstand such a touching request? I cocked my gun, came close to the good creature, and shot a bullet through its head. It fell headlong into the water; the gray head appeared for an instant, then sank and left no trace.

"The old woman fell upon her knees; I saw her fold her withered hands and move her lips silently. Undoubtedly, she breathed a prayer for Minka's departed soul.

"Then she arose wearily. 'I thank you, sir,' she said. 'You have just done me a greater kindness than when you sent me the money. When you go home give my respects to the lady baroness. Tell her I need nothing more. Three are already at rest, and the fourth will not delay long. And so may God preserve you. I am freezing. I shall go back to the house and warm myself a little. The night will be cold and the house is empty. May God reward you a thousandfold, sir! No; you shall not go with me! I have no one, and the cursed music will let me sleep very well if I stop my ears tightly enough. Good-night, sir! Rest well. And the Lord God above will understand and deal kindly with us. Amen!'

"She crossed herself and bowed quietly. Then she climbed the slope across the meadow, and I watched her until she reached her hut above and closed the door behind her.

"I myself returned to the path in a state of mind that baffles description. The universal misery of mankind was about the drift of it. But other elements mingling with it gave the peculiar experience something at once grotesque and awful. A professional psychologist would have had difficulty in understanding it.

"Fortunately the weather took care that I did not lose myself in this bottomless pit of fruitless speculation. Just as I reached the first houses, the rain began to fall in such torrents that I was obliged to

seek shelter and wait until the storm should abate before attempting to return to the estate. Naturally, I hastened to the inn. I had a certain curiosity to see the famous judge's son on this day, when his old sweetheart had quietly taken herself out of the world to make room for his new one.

"It was a middle-class wedding of the usual sort. I looked through the open door into the hall, where the table had been removed to make room for the dancers. The wedding pair immediately struck my eyes, not unfavorably either; he was precisely such a man as I imagined, curly-headed, therefore popular among women, and with a frivolous, insolent face; on the whole, a good-looking rascal of the most common type. The young wife in her myrtle wreath, a provincial beauty, appeared much in love with her husband, but, from continual dancing with him, was too red and overheated to be lovely. Since she was rich, the husband had in fact obtained a better lot than his villainous deed warranted, and it was hardly to be expected that compensating justice would make him do penance for his sins through this marriage. He did not seem to be a man who would endure such penance calmly, much less pass even one sleepless night in useless thoughts upon the moral system of the world.

"The wretch disgusted me. Joining the peasants in the bar-room below, I drank my glass of beer in a very bitter mood, while the floor above creaked and trembled under the stamping and springing of the dancers, and the rain beat against the windows. This continued for more than an hour; then the rain ceased, the clouds moved towards the mountains, and the moon appeared. I decided to look about for a team, since the roads were now unfit for walking, and the wedding uproar made the prospect of a night here intolerable.

"Fortunately, just as I was going out to inquire for a teamster, I found my brother-in-law's coachman before the door with the hunting-wagon, my sister having sent him to bring me home. Both he and his horses needed a rest and a thorough drying. The homeward journey was so slow that I found everyone at the house asleep, and could not tell my horrible experience of the previous day till the following morning as we three sat at breakfast.

"We were still under the influence of the strange tragedy--my sister,

who had visited the 'four females' once during the summer, being affected even to tears--when the door opened, and my brother-in-law's steward entered. 'I merely wish to announce, Herr Baron,' he said, 'that there has been a fire during the night. God be thanked, it has not spread, and was not on our estate. But Mother Betsey's house is burned.'

"We looked at one another confounded.

"How did the fire start, and was any one injured?" asked my brother-in-law.

"The man shook his head.

"They know nothing positively, Herr Baron,' he said. 'At midnight, as the last dance was being played down in the inn--the judge's son was holding his wedding feast--they suddenly heard the fire-bells ring from the towers, and, rushing out, they saw Mother Lamitz's old hut up on the forest edge in bright flames. The fire streamed as quietly into the sky as if from a wood-pile, and although half the village was on foot, and the fire engine was dragged up the mountain, they could do nothing whatever, the flames having already devoured the last corner of the old rookery. It was only when there was nothing left to save that they mastered the fire; the ground walls, about a man's height, alone remain standing, if they too have not fallen by this time. At first there seemed to be nothing left of the women and the child. At length some one discovered in the corner where the loom had stood a ghastly heap of ashes and blackened bones, undoubtedly the remains of old Betsey, who, as old women can never be warm enough, probably heated the oven so hot that the rotten thing burst and the flames reached the rafters of the loom. She must have been quickly suffocated by the smoke and have died without further pain. But what became of her daughter and the little one nobody knows, and as for the donkey, which she esteemed so highly, not the smallest piece of its hide or bones can be discovered!'"